HOWARD BARKER'S DRAMA OF APORIAS:

FROM A PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE BODY TO AN ONTOLOGY OF THE FLESH

By

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TO MY LOVE AND LIFE

MY WIFE

SARA

CONTENTS

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dawn points, and another day
Prepares for heat and silence. Out at sea the dawn wind
Wrinkles and slides. I am here
Or there, or elsewhere. In my beginning.
[...] What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning. (T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*)

It seems I have arrived at another threshold again. In retrospect, looking over my shoulders back on the past four years, I cannot help but ineluctably recall an image which riveted Walter Benjamin's attention and inspired in him an emblematic, yet melancholy, image of history, to wit, Paul Klee's Angelus Novus. In that painting, the Angel's gaze is fixed upon the cumulative piling up of catastrophic occurrences and upheavals in a historically disastrous panorama while being irresistibly propelled backwards into the future by a violence wind (called, by Benjamin, Progress). Analogously, my personal history, subtended and surrounded by national and universal histories, held no paucity of predicaments in store for me, running the gamut from financial to personal and socio-cultural ones. Similar to the hovering figure in Klee's painting, not only have my eyes relentlessly weathered the vagaries and vicissitudes of national-universal histories, but to make things even more palpable and tragic, the analogy shifted from that of visual spectatorship to having me as the actual victim and recipient of its thrust.

To continue and extend the analogy, whilst my melancholy eyes were staggering from calamity to calamity, my Wife and my Mother have been my two wings that balmingly buoyed me up and sustained me safely through the travails of this journey. My supervisors have never ceased to act as benignly vigorous winds that Zephyr-like blew me further forward into an apparently abyssal future, while trying to turn my gaze from that riven past toward the prospect of a more auspicious future.

This thesis owes a debt of gratitude to a number of persons. Thomas's, Dan's, and Tony's many insightful comments had a formative influence on the structure of this thesis. I would like to

thank them for being ideal supervisors in every respect. All three of them responded to me and my writings with unflagging alacrity, perspicacity, and sagacity. PhD project, particularly in the UK, is a notoriously solitary undertaking, but Tony's treatment went beyond the bounds of formal and institutional duty and decorum. He hospitably offered the opportunity of more frequent meetings (rather than alienating and impersonal correspondence) during the first year and ever since, and thus had a relieving influence on the throes of the work. Besides, Tony has patiently tried to reign my theoretical flights by harnessing them to the dramatic texts and theatrical contexts ever since. Thomas diffused the daunting prospect of working with him as well as that of the philosophers at stake in the thesis not only by his insightful hints but by beginning our first interlocution by calling me his "colleague." He showed me how to tame the turbulence of an oceanic mind and to present it in serene, yet distilled, drops.

The project initiated with Thomas Docherty and Tony Howard as its supervisors. The thesis had nearly safely passed the jaws of Scylla and Charybdis when, to our sheer distress, Thomas was meted out his share of the state of exception by the invisible hands of the marketization of the university. I was still in the haze and daze of the ontological dereliction inflicted on me, while having no resort, when Dan stepped in to salvage me without being compelled by any sense of personal or institutional duty or obligation. Since then, Dan has proved to be more than a supervisor both intellectually and emotionally. Dan has not only proved a doyen of vast scholarship, but has treated my work and me with laudable care and critical acuity. He is the epitome of a teacher (a species which seems to be on the verge of extinction in academia). Crucially, in addition to his scholarly guidance, he has proved a precious friend. The meaning of such a mutual friendship is well captured in Agamben's incisive observation on friendship:

> It is possible that the peculiar semantic status of the term "friend" has contributed to the discomfort of modern philosophers. It is common knowledge that no one has ever been able to satisfactorily define the meaning of the syntagm "I love you"; so much is this the case that one might think that it has a performative character: that its meaning, in other words, coincides with the act of its utterance. Analogous considerations could be made regarding the expression, "I am your friend," although recourse to the performative category seems impossible here. I maintain, rather, that "friend" belongs to the class of terms that linguists define as

nonpredicative; these are terms from which it is not possible to establish a class that includes all the things to which the predicate in question is attributed.

I am copiously thankful of my erudite examiners Professor Nicholas Royle and Professor Nadine Holdsworth for their useful comments as well.

Over the course of writing my PhD thesis I have been endowed with the mixed blessing of being in an extended correspondence and conducting three interviews with my dear Howard Barker. I hugely benefited from these opportunities and from the profound insights provided by Howard. I express my inestimable gratitude for his gracious and unstinting help.

Treading the trajectory of a doctoral dissertation looks like traipsing in an unmapped and uncharted desert, but some find oases in this desert. For me these oases were my mother, my wife, and some of my friends. Three friends have never ceased to be sources of inspiration, enthusiasm, and camaraderie: George Ttoouli, Stephen Barrell, and Simon Scott.

I am deeply grateful to my mother who has been a caressing and unsubstitutable presence and also a source of generous support and unceasing munificence throughout.

Above all, my most special thanks are due to my wife, Sara, for her cordial companionship and unwavering support. On more than one occasion, she has provided mana for my parched spirit and her quality of affection has carved its trace.

Declaration

This thesis is submitted to the University of Warwick in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It has been composed by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree**.**

ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I intend to approach and explore Howard Barker's corpus, interweaving philosophical and critical analysis. This thesis posits Barker as primarily a European dramatist in whose tragic theatre aesthetics, ethics, and ontology are treated *aporetically*. Barker's drama, in this study, is succinctly characterized as the *drama of sense and différance* which is inherently traversed with the question of *aporia*. The concept of aporia forms and inform this thesis. Aporia, as deployed here, designates a situation or condition in which the conditions of possibility proves as the conditions of impossibility. Furthermore, my deployment of "aporia" more than being confined to a strict philosophical-conceptual sense or logic, articulates a topological mode of relationality between two entities or processes which is at once non-synthetic and non-dualistic. To demonstrate the aporetic nature of the three foregoing domains in Barker, I will focus on four pivotal matters: body, death, subjectivity, and language.

The sections concerned primarily with the body aim to investigate the ways the body plays an essential, pervasive role in Barker in its various respects prominent among which are ontology, ethics, and aesthetics. In Barker, the body is not only treated as the locus of an aesthetic process of self-fabrication, self-cultivation and re-configuration of perception and sensibility, but also as the ground (or vector) for encountering, and relating to, the Other and/or the Event; and, finally, as the medium of political resistance and subversion. The body is demonstrated to be the ground, and place of register, of contestation, convocation, and intersection between immanence and transcendence, hetero-affectivity and auto-affectivity, the lived and unlived body, and autonomy and heteronomy. I have proposed a thesis called 'con-tactile aesthetic-ethic'. This thesis is predicated on four principles: proximity, flesh, inter-corporeality, and transitivity – of corporeal schemas, affective traces, embodied attitudes, and figural patterns; though the role of desire is not negligible. Consequently, I will expose and ponder on various facets of such moments in Barker through considering moments involving trauma, pain, transcendence/transgression, intimacy, sacrifice and eroticism.

I will deliberate death from two standpoints: aporetics of death and aesthetics of death. It is my contention that, as regards Barker's conception and depiction of death, two distinct, yet interrelated, ways can be discerned. Two propositions are thus advanced and pursued. Firstly,

death in Barker involves a possibility of impossibility with all its existential-ontological implications. Second, death in Barker entails, and transpires as, an impossibility of possibility. As such, it is my argument that the nature of death (in Barker's works) is fundamentally aporetic. Initially I will elicit and delineate the significant affinities Barker shares with Heidegger with respect to the existential-ontological dimensions of death and their import in Barker's cosmos and his characters' subjective, intersubjective and socio-political lives (death as a criterion for existential authenticity, individuation, and autonomy). Subsequently, I will identify and probe the crucial points at which he diverges from a Heideggerian attitude, and evinces idiosyncrasies which are more congruent, variously, with Derridean, Levinasian, and Blanchotian stances with respect to notions such as death as impossibility of possibility, death as limit, and death as gift from the Other, and death as liminal space for relation with radical alterity exteriority, the encounter with and exposure to the evental and self-transcendence.

“Write in order not simply to destroy, in order not simply to conserve, in order not simply to transmit; write in the thrall of the impossible real, that share of disaster wherein every reality, safe and sound, sinks”

- Maurice Blanchot, *Writing of The Disaster §*152

I do these things
Oh how I persist I am at least persistent
And I ask,
Does anybody want them?
The answer comes back,
Nobody at all
So l go on

- Howard Barker, *The Forty*

Because life is short
We must remember to keep asking it the same question
Until the repeated question and the same silence become answer
In words broken open and pressed to the mouth
And the last silence reveal the lining
Until at last this thing exist separately
At all levels of the landscape and in the sky
And in the people who timidly inhabit it
The locked name for which is open, to dust and to no thoughts
Even of dying, the fuzzy first thought that gets started in you
and then there's no stopping it.
It is so much debris of living, and as such cannot be transmitted
Into another usable substance, but is irreducible
From these glares and stormy silences and sharp-elbowed protests.
But it is your landscape, the proof that you are there,
To deal with or be lost in
In which the silent changes might occur.

- John Ashbery, *Three Poems*, The New Spirit

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Tragedy of Sense and Différance:

Howard Barker's Drama of Aporias

Perhaps the world deserves to be disdained?
Perhaps
Loving the world
As so many claim to do
Is merely
A Failure
Of
Imagination?
What is there
To compare it to?
(*The Swing at Night*)

Introduction: Howard Barker as a European Dramatist

At a juncture in his philosophical treatise on his proposed strand of theatre – the Art of Theatre - Barker pauses to distil the thus far propounded idiosyncrasies of it aphoristically: "A vocabulary for the art of theatre [:] / Infinite / Functionless / Intractable / Nowhere / Incalculable / Illogical / Arbitrary / Are these not the attributes of death?" (*Death, the One, and the Art of Theatre*[1] 92). Prima facie, such a negative description of a "place" or "theatrical phenomenon and site" called the "Theatre of Catastrophe" – claimed to occupy no time and no place, to bear no relation to the external world, and to have no determinate essence or nature - strikes us at best as paradoxical and at worst as antinomial. The antinomy arises from the foregoing definition of Barker's theatre that, while ostensibly determining a *phenomenon* – which, according to Kant's definition, is a priori conditioned, or qualified, by time, space, relation, and modality- proves to depict an *enigma*

[1] Henceforth abbreviated to *DOAT*.

(partaking of death, irrationality, and the infinite to the point of identification). If we conjoin this proposition with another assertion in which Barker characterizes his theatre as a "black box" (*Arguments for a Theatre* 74)[2] – irrevocably estranged and severed from the so-called real or the outside world, and foreclosed to all its discursive disciplines and ontological principles, we find ourselves confronted with a space or phenomenon which can be identified either as a black hole to be tackled by quantum physics or as a sublime, transcendent realm pertaining to the domain of metaphysics.

In the same vein, this enigmatic status is augmented by the final rhetorical question – "Are these not the attributes of death?" - adumbrating an identity between Barker's Art of Theatre and death (characterized, in Barker, by sheer ontological indeterminacy and figuring as the secret space of non-knowledge par excellence); an identification which renders it, ontologically, highly ambiguous. Given the establishment of this identification, and eliciting our inklings from the way death is depicted by Barker throughout his dramatic and theoretical work (see Chapter 4), his theatre transpires immediately as an evental site of catastrophic circumstances which subtracts itself (and its audience) from the established state of theatre and the symbolic order (discourse), in which it is apparently situated, thereby assuming a negative existence, designating non-existence, or a void, which defies epistemological comprehension and ontological determination from the standpoint of the current world or state of affairs. Nevertheless, examining other passages by Barker on related issues might help us unfold this arcane formula and ferret out various facets of "void" and "evental catastrophe" in Barker's drama further.

There are, at least, two points in Barker's work that can illuminate the nature and meaning of this void-like status of Barker's theatre at stake above. Firstly, Barker notably locates his tragic Art of Theatre on the edge of the void, or, more precisely, suspended over the abyss separating the living (the dwellers of the current ontology, or existing situation) and the dead (or the imaginary people to come, those lying beyond the ontological bounds and discursive terms and conditions of the existing situation). Indeed Barker, attributing a liminal or transitional space to his tragedy, sets the foremost task of such tragedy as to throw "a frail bridge of imagination" over "this appalling chasm" (*DOAT* 1) stretching between the dead and the living, an imaginative connection provided by the transgressive nature of his tragedy: "Theatre is situated on the bank of the Styx (the side of

[2] See also *Arguments for a Theatre* (henceforth abbreviated to *Arguments*) 221.

the living). The actually dead cluster at the opposite side, begging to be recognized. What is it they have to tell? Their mouths gape ..." (*DOAT* 20).

Secondly, Barker's theatre, ironically, has proved to occupy the position of an almost "void" in a different sense. Indeed, the Theatre of Catastrophe, as numerous critics including Lamb (5-21) and Megson (488-9) have poignantly acknowledged, has been persistently neglected and relegated to the fringes by both dominant theatre companies, such as National Theatre, Royal Shakespeare Company, and Royal Court, and in the British critical scholarship spanning a period of almost three decades[3]. As such, Barker's theatre has, in a sense, gradually come to exist in, and as, a void; as a count-as-nothing within the count-as-one of the discourse.[4] Barker himself, through the devised persona (R Houth), laments: "The Wrestling School became a *rumor*, its very existence a denial of the laws of entertainment, its appearances unadvertised…" (*A Style and its Origins*[5] 47). This partly arises from Barker's adamant refusal to pander to dominant socio-cultural norms (including consumerist principles (use value, exchange value)), and national values (such as national identity, optimism, progress, and to conform to dominant values of humanism and neo-liberalism). In no trivial part, it also stems from its being subversive of ideological security and moral certainty, from Barker's skepticism towards the (fabricated) notion/phenomenon of the collective, his alleged elitism, and his refusal to be relevant and topical, accessible, and celebratory (see *Arguments* 32-7, 48-50, 71-76, 79-110, passim).

The foregoing description, succinctly, provides a glimpse into the complications, paradoxes, and daunting density entailed in the aesthetic, ethical, and ontological dimensions of Barker's work; problematics and complexities that the subsequent chapters will strive to tackle and unravel. Howard Barker (1946-) - acclaimed by Sarah Kane as "the Shakespeare of our age" and credited by *The Times* as "the greatest living British dramatist"[6] - is a highly prolific and versatile writer – (at once a dramatist, theorist, poet, and painter). Over the last five decades (since 1969) he has written over a hundred and ten plays, six volumes of poetry, and two books of theory

[3] There are exceptions to this regrettable rule, irrespective of the rare performance of more orthodox, accessible and realist work such as Scenes from an Execution staged by National Theatre in 2012.
[4] My analytical-critical descriptions are consistently underpinned and informed by concepts articulated in Alain Badiou's evental ontology and ethics of the event. In this regard see his *Being and Event* 25-39; *Ethics* 27, 41; *Inaesthetics*; and *Conditions*.
[5] Henceforth referred to as *Style*.
[6] See Dan Rebellato, "Sarah Kane: an Appreciation" New Theatre Quarterly 59 (1999), 280-1.

- *Arguments for a Theatre* and *Death, the One and the Art of Theatre*, the former in Adornian essay-like form[7] (formally in conformity with the speculative, experimental, and critical thought content presented in them), and the latter in aphoristic-fragmentary pieces and passages - which contain his aesthetic theories and the philosophy of his tragic drama, among other issues. Barker has also written a pseudo-autobiography *A Style and its Origins* (co-authored with an imaginary character, an alter ego: Eduardo Houth) delineating the trajectory of his personal life and artistic career by presenting snatches and vignettes of his decisive encounters with other people throughout his life.

The fundamental claim of this doctoral dissertation is that I consider Howard Barker as primarily belonging to the European literary-dramatic tradition, and only secondarily to the British tradition. Recognition of Barker as an avowedly European, rather than a British, dramatist, is based not only on his own emphatic self-identification as well as that by some critics (such as Sakellaridou), but also due to the ontological, aesthetic and intellectual nature of his work which persistently solicits reference to another genealogy and conceptual heritage than that of the British or even English dramatic tradition. Barker's characterization as European in aesthetic, historical, and socio-cultural terms is illuminating as it can be identified as not only non-Hegelian but, more significantly, post-Hegelian. He observes: "To be European is to hold to opposites and live, if not rejoice, in the contradictions [...] The individual and the collective are never more embattled than they are here, and reconciliation is impossible given the now ancestral nature of the conflict. It is perpetual oscillation, and all talk of harmony is false, a self-deception" (in Brown 129-30).

Though the preceding statement initially sounds Hegelian - as it tends to define the phenomenon at issue (European aesthetics and socio-historical dynamics) by means of a dichotomy or dialectical opposition – note that in an entirely non-Hegelian fashion, readily reminiscent of Adorno's idea of negative dialectics, not only does it adamantly refrain from positing or pursuing a synthetic dialectical reconciliation between the two terms, but contrarily, proceeds to affirm an irresolvable and irrevocable disparity and incongruity between them; and hence the affirmation of a persistence of an inassimilable negativity. As such, it displays indications of an acute apprehension and recognition of *différance* (in its Derridean sense) between rationality and irrationality, individual and communal, the speculative and conceptual thought.

[7] See Adorno, "The Essay as Form" in *Notes to Literature* 8.

Equally crucial, Barker elsewhere articulates his idea of being a European in terms of being "able to span both the rational and irrational in one mind" (Brown 117, 86). In this regard, even more worthy of attention are the grounds on which Barker makes such consequential observations. He points to the effacement of such intellectual traits and domains of thought from the British intellectual horizon and arts, and posits the English Reformation as the historical turning point for the domination of such a stance and the inexorable tendency of its underlying philosophical and socio-political attitudes to abolish the "speculative habit of thinking" and "the idea of the dark" (117). Barker arraigns the consequent historical cessation of the intellectual-aesthetic preoccupation with "thinking the unthinkable" (Ibid); characteristics which are all readily discernible as the central concerns of George Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-Luc Nancy among others (see *Inner Experience* 43, 67, 80, 108, 127; *Unavowable Community*, *Inoperative Community*; see also Leslie Hill 2001, Ffrench 179-185, Stoekl 92-102, and Gregg 10-13).[8]

Nevertheless traces of Nietzsche's, Antonin Artaud's, and Beckett's respective approaches to drama in general and tragic drama in particular are occasionally discernible in Barker's dramatic theory and work (the delineation of which is beyond the textual economy of this Introduction). However, in degree of affinity - even surpassing his sporadic convergences with Nietzsche, Beckett, and Artaud - Barker's aesthetics of loss and excess coupled with his poetics of sacrifice bear striking affinities and resonances with Bataille's ideas on similar issues (of subjectivity, transgression, the sacred, and excessive ethics and ontology) as well as his aesthetic stance and ideas. Notably akin to Bataille's avowed intention (the principles he promotes), Barker affirms his ultimate aesthetic goal to be the instigation of a "state of loss" (primarily in terms of morality and knowledge); as he clearly observes, in the Theatre of Catastrophe the "end of the efforts of writer, director, actors, is a state of loss" (Barker 1998 p.116). He proceeds to elucidate the term thus: "the state of loss describes a state of lost morality, an ethical vacuum, a denial, a rebuke to order, a melancholy and a pain. It is a revelation of the essential terror of the world, and an abyss" (Ibid.). Equally notably, the poetics of sacrifice evidently informs the dynamics and thematics of *Hurts Given and Received*, *Blok/Eko Fence in its Thousandth Year*, *The Ecstatic Bible*, *Rome*, and *Gertrud- The Cry*, among others.

[8] In this regard see *Inner Experience* 127, for example.

The foremost reason to posit Barker's drama's enrootedness in and belonging to the continental philosophical and European avant-garde traditions is his preoccupation with the question of Nihilism. Indeed the investigation of Barker's approach to nihilism can, effectively, lead to the determination of Barker's position in relation to modernism and postmodernism. On the one hand, (reminiscent of Adorno's more contemporary detection of the strain of nihilism inherent in Enlightenment and modernity in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, but equally notably attesting to Barker's modernist critique of modernity), there are his approach to and concern with the question of nihilism and the death of god, the crisis of value, meaning, and truth, evental ontology and non-mimetic aesthetics. Equally crucial, Barker's departure and divergence from the modernist paradigm (but also his qualified convergences with postmodernism, or more strictly, post-structuralism) resides, I would argue, in his aporetic approach to the question of Nihilism.

The question of nihilism indeed reveals one of the main points of contact between Barker on the one hand, and Hegel and Nietzsche (though variously), as two of the heralds and key deployers of the concept of nihilism in their modernist critique of modernity, on the other. Both Nietzsche and Hegel, as explicitly stated by themselves as well as their commentators[9], were preoccupied with the problems of nihilism and the death of God, coupled with the issue/phenomenon of bourgeois individualism, fabricated collectivism, and the collision between the individual and the collective as well as the state. Though, giving an elaborate account of the relevant facets of Hegel's and Nietzsche's ideas on the concomitant questions of tragedy and nihilism is well beyond the space constraints of this introduction, it is nevertheless worth underscoring that any examination of the philosophical roots of Barker's strand of tragedy should begin with a meticulous analysis of his affinities and convoluted relation with both Hegel and Nietzsche.

The most salient evidence for the problem of nihilism in Barker, apart from the ontological ones explored below, can be detected in his declaration of the death of God and in the existential impetus Barker attributes to his characters. Barker's characters are, avowedly, driven by a reason not to commit suicide, hence it can evidently be inferred that they are haunted with the formidable

[9] See Robert R. Williams *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God* (Oxford, 2012) see 1-16; see Chapters 10 and 11 in particular; see also Robert Young's chapters on Nietzsche (44-56) and Hegel (57-70) in his *Death of God and the Meaning of Life.* See also Nuno Nabais's *Nietzsche and the Metaphysics of the Tragic*. Trans. Martin Earl. London: Continuum, 2006; see Chapters 6, 1 and 2 in particular.

question of nihilism and loss of meaning in the absence of a metaphysical, or transcendental frame within which they can have a morally-teleologically secured and meaningful experience of the world. In accordance with this decentredness of self, crisis of meaning, the death of god, and nihilism, interspersed throughout his book of speculative reflections (on death, tragedy, the Other (the One) and desire) are Barker's use of words such as "hope-lessness" and "meaning-lessness" to characterize his brand of tragedy (see *DOAT* 32, 63), though equally vehemently he repudiates any ascription of the charge of despair and pessimism (13, 14, 58, passim) to his theatre on this count as well as any identity between the former and the latter.

Barker's own explicit remark in this regard - concerning the chief provocation for his characters' pursuit of the transgressive acts and yearning for the impossible(s), that is, their being impelled by an intuition of ontological inadequacy and a search for a reason not to commit suicide – is elucidating, since it so appears that attempts to overcome nihilism constitute the existential raison d'etre of his characters. Affirming the problem of "suicide" as one of central concerns of his work, Barker juxtaposes suicide and melancholy and identifies *Golgo* and *Ego in Arcadia*[10] as "melancholic" plays:

> The search for a reason not to commit suicide lies at the heart of my work, and what is distilled from that is a sense of melancholy. The most melancholic of my plays is perhaps *Golgo*, though *Ego in Arcadia* is also profoundly melancholic. I don't mean depressing. Only a populist, entertainment-obsessed, comedy obsessed culture confuses melancholy with depression (in Brown 73).

It is my argument that Barker implicitly poses three remedies for, or ways of overcoming, the problem of nihilism thus perceived; all three are deduced from Barker's treatment of concomitant issues in his work. Primarily, Barker's reaction to this quandary is the creation of neither a utopia nor a dystopia (both variously associated with modernist and postmodernist movements). Rather, it is my contention (see Chapter 4) that he creates a heterotopia, or an immanent, evental ontology (the Theatre of Catastrophe), governed by an ethics of the event (self-transcendence, self-cultivation, and becoming-other) which affords the possibility of speculating/imagining an other world (non-mimetically related to the so-called real world) and the

[10] Henceforth abbreviated to *Arcadia*.

possibility of discovering alternative ways of living and speaking. Secondly, he posits death not only as arche and telos of his art of tragedy, but also as the ultimate secret and mystery of the world and human existence. I should give the caveat that by this argument I am not implying at all that death holds the key to the meaning or mystery of existence (Death as the Logos), since proximity to death, in Barker, entails a deconstruction of identity and totality. Death seems to be assumed as at once nothing and as the determinant of everything in Barker's opinion, holding out the prospect/possibility of another mode of existence, another world and presaging the prospect of the impossible (intuited in transgressive experiences such as proximity, sacrifice and erotic desire). As such, death – not merely as the ultimate Unknown, but the Unknowable - occupies an aporetic position of being both a void (nothingness) and a vortex teeming with virtualities. Barker's third response to the problem of nihilism (caused, among others, by the totalitarian impulse inherent in rationalism) and the *ontological inadequacy of the world* (see *DOAT* 33) is the creation of a stylistic, linguistic, and affective excess/plethora that (as the concomitant condition of an evental ontology) serves to compensate for this poignantly perceptible lack. In consequence, heteronomous, creative "desire," rather than desire as lack, plays a prominent role in his cosmos.

A concise delineation of Barker's aesthetic principles is required in order to apprehend the extent to which he evinces intersections with the European avant-garde. When we survey Barker's writings, five central principles prove to underpin his aesthetics: speculation, imagination, contradiction, autonomy, and excess (or plethora)[11] Here I have merely sufficient space to briefly dwell on "speculation" and "contradiction."[12] The primary attribute that merits scrutiny is "speculation". In order to unravel the implications of the term "speculative" in Barker's drama, and to trace historical and genealogical roots of the relation between the Empirical and the Speculative, a clarification of the underpinnings of the terms and periods indicated here will be proposed.

The arguments proposed by Anthony Easthope in a recent attempt at a deconstructionist re-definition of a constellation of concepts - including nationalism, national ideology, national identity, and the idea of Englishness in general, and as they manifest themselves in English poetry, drama, and novel in particular – corroborate Barker's characterization of Empiricism and the

[11] There some other significant and recurrent components such as pain, anxiety, ambiguity/obscurity, and beauty which I have explored at length in the following four chapters.
[12] I will engage extensively with the other tenets or traits in the subsequent chapters.

prevailing British intellectual tradition and culture. Easthope identifies Empiricism as the paradigmatic English philosophical tradition. Taking his critical lead from Marx,[13] Easthope seeks to demonstrate how (regardless of exceptions to this rule) national ideology (Englishness) derives its values and premises from a predominantly Empirical tradition which was revised and revived in 20th century. In this regard, Easthope primarily focuses on a critical historical moment in English history in the 1960s when "the New Left picked up Marx's account of the English philosophic tradition as empiricist, building it on to a more contemporary, Althusserian foundation" (62). As he further underscores, empiricism should "[n]ot to be confused with the 'factual' or the 'empirical'", rather it "affirms that reality can be experienced more or less directly by the unprejudiced observer and that knowledge derives more or less directly from that experience" (63).

According to Easthope, Englishness is obsessed with the transparency of representation and the idea of a simple homology of subject and object. Thus, English Empiricism stands in counterposition to European philosophical Romanticism, Idealism and Hegelianism with their accommodation of ambiguity, the fragmentary and the singular as non-aberrant and noteworthy.[14] As such, the tragic has an opportunity to insert itself into such a culture and selfhood and estrange Englishness as its uncanny double through the avowal of that which is outside the self. What is at stake in empiricism which makes it significant for a study of Barker's speculative tragedy and its relation with his contemporary establishment theatre are its epistemological and ontological claims and assumptions.

In light of Easthope's compelling argument, we can discern Barker's valorization of "the speculative" (and his pitting of it against the empirical/empiricist) as a substantial critical-constructive intervention into the current British state of arts and socio-cultural discourse in two salient respects: epistemological and ontological. In this regard, Barker's cogent explanation, in an interview with Aleks Sierz, provides us with ample clue as to the nature, dimensions and implications of "speculation" in his drama. Barker draws incisive contrast between *the speculative* and *the fantastical*, which dispels any misconstrual of the term or mis-identification between the two[15]:

[13] More lucidly, Marx's identification of the principal English philosophical tradition as Empiricism.
[14] For a fuller elaboration of the aspects of this issue see Easthope 15.
[15] See Brown 77.

> Whilst all these situations are deeply speculative, they are not fantastical: it is important to make that distinction. As theatre might have thought itself being at various times. In fact, it is an intensification of experience that you are seeing on stage [...] So, these are real, instinctive feelings, but the context is strange, and that's the distortion I always aim for, both as a writer and a director. [Furthermore] The whole design concept is very particular [...] it removes [the situation] from the real world, but at the same time, it's thoroughly of the world. It's speculative, it's not empirical" (in Brown 2004, 112).

Barker's belonging to the European poetic-tragic tradition can be still more appreciated, as particularly with regard to the speculative strain in his drama, if we notice how the speculative – in conjunction with the contrast between the empirical and speculative, respectively associated with the continental and the analytical[16] philosophical traditions - leads us further to pursue the roots in European poets and thinkers such as Holderlin, Kant, Schelling and Hegel. The paramount point to be mentioned in order to determine what Barker's understanding of speculation does "not" involve can be fulfilled through a contrasting reference to Hegel's speculative philosophy.[17] Indelibly linked with the notion of "speculation" in Barker is the tenet of "contradiction" (see *Arguments* 22, 29, 38, 46, passim),[18] the meticulous exploration of which is indeed beyond both the scope and space constraints of the present study. The schematic account of the concepts - including contradiction, (moral-ontological) speculation, the evental, the impossible, sacrifice, (the repudiation of) reconciliation and recognition, and an economy of excess – pivotal to Barker's aesthetic delineated above affords us an insight into the degree to which Barker is rooted in and critically extends the European/Continental tradition of thought, stretching from Aristotle, to Hegel, up to Bataille, Blanchot, Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze, and Derrida. Concrete textual

[16] For a more extended explication of this point by Hyppolite and his elaboration on the speculative aspect of Hegel's thought, along with an elucidating comparison between the speculative and the empirical, see Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence,* trans. Leonard Lawlor and Arnit Sen. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, 92.

[17] In a sense, Barker's notion of speculation can be argued to stand as the polar opposite of Hegel's in that it never results in a synthetic resolution of a contradiction involved. In Barker contradiction designates a situation of disjunctive synthesis, a non-unifying proximity, an irreducible self-difference. Hegel's idea of speculation in principle entails the resolution of contradiction (as the motor of the concept). For a sustained and elucidating reflection on this point see Mark C. Taylor, *Altarity* 115; see also Dastur 77.

[18] In this regard see *Arguments* 22; see also 46.

manifestations of these theoretical characterizations are copiously provided in the succeeding chapters.

Aporia, Body, Death

This thesis posits Howard Barker as primarily a European dramatist in whose tragic theatre aesthetics, ethics, and ontology are treated aporetically. In this thesis, I intend to approach and explore Barker's corpus (dramatic, theoretical, and poetic) interweaving philosophical speculation and critical analysis. Barker's drama, I shall argue in this study, can most succinctly be characterized as the *drama of sense and différance*[19] underpinned by the question of ontology, whilst all three are informed by the question of *aporia*.

My understanding of the terms ethics and aesthetics will be fully elaborated over the course of the thesis.[20] Ethics, notwithstanding the fact that Barker places it at the crux of his Theatre of Catastrophe, remains deeply neglected and its premises, attributes, and modes unarticulated in the critical scholarship. In a diagram in which Barker illustrates the relation between various facets of his drama and the surrounding discursive forces as well as contemporary theatrical trends and aesthetic values, Barker places "moral speculation" at the very hub of his scheme (see *Arguments* 86). Ethics designates a non-normative, non-evaluative, and non-prescriptive as well as immanent practice/exercise of self-overcoming and self-cultivation on the one hand, and a certain mode of *relationality to the Other* (non-synthetic and non-foundational) on the other. The dynamics of this evental mode of ethics, which subtends Barker's work, is particularly manifested through affective and heteronomous states such as those of desire, pain, and transgression. On this premise, I would argue that aesthetics and ethics in Barker are inextricably intertwined.

The concept of aporia forms and inform this thesis, and is not confined to its application to death (particularly by Derrida), but as Derrida indicates it also subsumes issues such as ethics,

[19] Although Derrida's sustained and rigorous articulation of the concept of différance constitutes the crux of my deployment and understanding of the concept in this thesis, Deleuze's definition of difference is also one of the premises of my understanding of difference throughout. See *Difference and Repetition* 64/89.

[20] For an explication of the term "aesthetics," as intended and wielded here, see Nietzsche's *Gay Science* 299 and Foucault in "On the Genealogy of Ethics" in *Foucault Reader*, 350-351. As regards "ethics", in one significant sense, I take my cue from Foucault. For a detailed delineation of the premises of this certain conception of ethics see Foucault's *The Use of Pleasure*, particularly 375-380, 90-93.

the problem of borders, politics, theology, aesthetics, and law (see Chapter 4). Aporia in this thesis will designate a situation or condition in which the conditions of possibility prove to be the conditions of impossibility. More strictly, aporia involves a hyper-dialectical rather than a dialectical, or oppositional, relationship. In my conception of the term, aporia has conceptual affinity with a cluster of analogue concepts, including the evental (as elaborated by Deleuze and Badiou variously), différance, the Levinasian notion of proximity, and Merleau-Ponty's notion of chiasmaticity (of the flesh and language). The common thread informing all the foregoing notions, primarily, is their being intrinsically opposed to a metaphysics of presence, totalitarianism, and identity-thinking; equally importantly the other common attribute is their mode of being and relationality[21] (to the self and the other), to wit: disjunctive (non-Hegelian) synthesis, or asynthesis. More lucidly, it designates a relationship in which two phenomena, though being mutually constitutive and in a condition of intense interwovenness and proximity, yet do not settle into either union, unified resolution, and fusion or antithesis or binary opposition.

Aporia, I would argue, can be discerned to be operative on four levels and to include four spheres. These four spheres comprise: death, the ontological status of Barker's catastrophic world, the status of divine/theological in his work, and the nature of the self. Though the very term "sense" itself will be subtending my analysis of plays, I shall be wielding the term "sense" in the title instead of body, embodiment, or even flesh; primarily because of subtle and multivalent ways in which Barker treats, engages with, and incorporates various senses, sensory organs, modes of sensibility, and embodiment. In addition, I did not intend to confine the scope of discussion and terms of analysis to an impoverished and circumscribed conception of embodied and intercorporeal dimensions of being (of the self and the inter-personal as well as socio-political worlds) among Barker's protagonists. Secondarily, since I do not intend to propose and "impose" far-fetched and forced affinities between the concepts (elaborated by the thinkers whom I am referencing and drawing on) and the problematics, vexing concerns, and issues in Barker's plays, I am not restricting my understanding of the principal terms (including body, death, sense and difference) to a single thinker. It is worth underscoring that my juxtaposition of these thinkers is

[21] As I will extensively demonstrate throughout the thesis, "relationality," - and its particular mode (pervasive in Barker) of "heteronomous" (in the sense elaborated by Levinas, Bataille, and Blanchot) autonomy – are persistently ignored or misconstrued in the current critical scholarship (see the moments of con-tactile aesthetics-ethics in Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4).

not conducted with a myopic ignorance of significant conceptual differences and their individual and unique systems of thought;[22] thus aiming to collapse their idiosyncrasies and divergences (and, at times, even different ontological visions).

To demonstrate the aporetic nature of the three foregoing domains in Barker, I will focus on body, death and subjectivity and language; four distinct spheres or issues that constitute the pivotal and recurrent subjects in Barker's oeuvre.

To begin, the body looms large in Barker's work in various guises: corpses, nakedness, pain, eroticism, and desire. Nevertheless, except for Kristine Kiehl's "Body inside out: Sight, Insight, and the Senses in He Stumbled" (198-210) there has been no proper and well-founded consideration of the role of body in Barker. Barker's treatment of the body can be argued to comprise two principal parts: critical-constructive (on socio-political, aesthetic-ethical, and existential or inter-subjective planes); and de-constructive (on an ontological level). Barker pursues the former through a contrastive conjunction of a vision of the body as manifested through moments which demand intentionality, subjective autonomy, intense perceptual sensibility, and hetero-affectivity - including those of intercorporeal proximity, erotic love, desire, pain, and nakedness[23] - with those moments associated with paradigms of medicine and science, pornography, and culture industry and consumerism. In case of the former, I suggest a recourse to phenomenology (in its mid-Merleau-Pontyian and Levinasian strands) which I firmly maintain can effectively help unravel the facets and subtleties of body in Barker. As regards the latter, later Merleau-Ponty, Nancy, Levinas and Derrida are the main theoretical sources.

Taking my cue from the foregoing point, and based on the self-conception, perception, and modes of relationality evident in characters in Barker's plays, I have proposed a thesis called 'con-tactile aesthetic-ethic'. This thesis is predicated on four principles: proximity, flesh (divergence and reversibility), inter-corporeality (corporeal intersubjectivity) and transitivity (or contractibility) – of corporeal schemas, affective traces, embodied attitudes, and figural patterns;

[22] Specifically with respect to sense, thinkers on whose though I will primarily be drawing will be Levinas, Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty; I shall, however, make extensive references to other closely associated thinkers such as Nancy, Derrida, and D. Anzieu too. For an extended elaboration on the implications of the "sense" in Levinas, in particular, see also *Otherwise than Being* (henceforth abbreviated to *OB*) 15, 78-9, 92, 129; and *Collected Philosophical Papers* 146-7.

[23] Significantly, nakedness, in Barker, figures as the immanent-material spirituality of the body, desire, and heteronomous relationality.

though the role of desire (and/or eroticism) is not negligible. In advancing the above thesis, I shall pursue three main propositions. Primarily, I will seek to demonstrate how not only the nature of body, but also embodied relationality, in certain plays and dramatic moments, can be effectively explored and perceived in terms of mid Merleau-Ponty's concept of the perceptual body and, in others, in terms of Merleau-Ponty's concept of "flesh". It is my contention that the body (as flesh) in Barker's work can be identified first and foremost in terms of chiasmaticity, thus manifesting attributes such as divergence, reversibility, porosity, fluidity, affectivity, and transitivity.

As for the section on death, I will deliberate death from two standpoints: the aporetics of death and the aesthetics of death. The ensuing proposition serves as the point of departure as well as underlying assumption for our discussion: that the significance of death, to Barker, can be argued to reside in four distinct, yet indelibly intertwined, dimensions: ontological-metaphysical, aesthetic, ethical (strictly, in the sense variously elaborated by Levinas and Merleau-Ponty), and ideological (that is, sociocultural and historical).

Regarding the first section, it is my contention that Barker's approach to, and depiction of, death can be considered in two distinct yet interrelated, ways. I will thus advance and pursue two propositions. Firstly, the nature of death (in Barker's works) is fundamentally aporetic. Accordingly, initially I will delineate the significant affinities Barker shares with Heidegger with respect to the existential-ontological dimensions of death and their import in Barker's cosmos and his characters' personal, intersubjective and socio-political lives. Subsequently, I will expose and probe the crucial points at which he diverges from a Heideggerian attitude, and evinces idiosyncrasies which are more congruent and consonant, variously, with Derridean, Levinasian, and Blanchotian stances with respect to notions such as death as impossibility of possibility, death as limit, and death as gift from the Other, and death as liminal space for relation with radical alterity/exteriority, the encounter with and exposure to the eventual.

The thesis is accordingly divided into three principal sections, concentrating on the aporetic status of death, body, and language. The methodology I pursue throughout the thesis is that of a deconstructive "double movement." By adopting the "double movement" approach, I aim for a particular kind of interpretive practice which involves a simultaneously immanent (descriptive-critical) and transcendent (philosophical-conceptual) analysis, thereby striving to maintain my fidelity to the irreducible singularity of the text under discussion (along with its ruptures,

contradictions, and resistances).[24] As such, I shall not seek to bring the philosophical concepts (transcendent to the literary text) to bear upon the preponderance of local details that refuse to settle into theoretical generalizations. Rather, I will embark on a close textual engagement/explication (thematically and problematically) that enables the problematics, vexing concerns, and points of tension within the text to emerge; and only subsequently will proceed to the point that the necessity for that certain concept (that seems to capture and express the problem aptly) to be ushered in. Hence, the analysis will be as much informed and concerned with force as with form, and the critical concepts will help to detect and elicit the implications and ramifications of the interplay between the two.[25]

Critical Scholarship

As regards the theoretical approaches hitherto adopted towards Barker's work, three principal strands can be distinguished in current critical scholarship which, in turn, can summarily be referred to under the following rubrics: the Seductionist, the Nietzschean, and the Adornian. From among the foregoing three, in terms of theoretical premises and their consistent relevance to Barker's drama in general, it is only the first one which has been well elaborated; and the other two still remain considerably under-developed and riddled with numerous unaccounted problematics and complications.

To consider the first critical trend (the Seductionist), its main exponent is Charles Lamb who, in his book-length engagement with Barker (first published in 1997 and later appearing in a more developed and revised form in 2005), describes how the current methods of performance, and "contemporary performance theory" in general, prove inadequate when it comes to "staging Howard Barker's plays" (1) and accounting for "the irrational moments" prevalent in his theatre (2). Accordingly, he proceeds to advance his notion of "seduction" as a viable way of redressing this issue. Predicating his thesis concerning seduction on the postulates almost entirely derived from Baudrillard's theory, Lamb posits Barker's drama as a postmodernist strand in contemporary

[24] Deleuze too in his critical-expository reading of Spinoza makes use of a similar approach/notion. (See Deleuze (1988) 129, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. Trans. Robert Hurley. San Francisco: Ciry Lights).
[25] Derrida did not oppose form to content, but rather set form against force. In this regard see "Force and Signification" 3; in *Writing and Defference*, 1-36.

theatre. Lamb attempts to demonstrate this argument by pitting Barker's theatre and its characteristics against the goals promoted by projects of Modernity and Enlightenment (in their diverse strands including that of the Marxist-Hegelian) – which as identified by Lyotard comprise two chief manifestations: grand-narratives of speculation and grand narratives of emancipation (and their corresponding proponents in contemporary drama - most prominently including Edward Bond and Bertolt Brecht). Lamb argues, to an extent correctly, how Barker's plays and theory reside in their undermining and subverting values and norms valorised and endorsed by Rationalism and teleological models of history, truth-based discourses (including Marxism, psychoanalysis, and humanism), as well as normative definitions of reality, subjectivity. In the subsequent chapters Lamb embarks on the analysis of two plays – *The Castle* and *Judith* – predicated on the theory he has propounded. For the sake of clarity, suffice it here to give a very succinct description of what is at stake in Lamb's notion of seduction. The ensuing definition, also quoted by Lamb, might serve the purpose. Baudrillard defines seduction thus: "Seduction is that which extracts meaning from discourse and detracts it from its truth" (*Selected Writings* 149). Accordingly, basing his whole thesis argument and analysis on this definition (and its corollaries), Lamb postulates seduction as the very principle for all interpersonal relationships in Barker.

In the same register, David Ian Rabey in his lead article and introduction to a collection of articles entitled *Theatre of Catastrophe: New Essays on Howard Barker* (2006), confirming Lamb's critical stance, expresses his intention to follow Lamb's line of argument and yet to slightly extend its scope while giving it a Nietzschean twist (leaving aside the question o compatibility between the theories of two thinkers at stake): "but I would like to develop the range of associations which one can project (in the geometric sense) from this link. This initiative might appropriately begin with a consideration of what I would suggest to be Barker's principal artistic project: the reassessment of all values" (16). Unfortunately, he does not elaborate upon this point any further. Rabey's purported extension of the link Lamb establishes between Barker and Baudrillard, however, is only fleeting (his engagement, actually, does not exceeding the length of a page). Rabey limits his extension to the addition of one point (which already exists in Lamb), that is, extension of the power and principles of seduction to the theories of performance and acts of self-performance undertaken by Barker's characters, remarking: "indeed, Baudrillard's account of the process and dynamics of seduction might also serve as a description of the duels at the centre of

Barker's dramas, their struggles for the terms of-power and sexuality," thus reiterating the anti-psychological nature of seduction and the implied notion of a dramaturgy without a subject (17).

The primary point worth noting in this regard is that I do not intend to dismiss the viability and the presence of (moments of) "seduction" as a dramatic element in general in Barker. What I find problematic and am taking issue with here, however, is the scope and extent of its presence and relevance as claimed by Lamb and Rabey on the one hand, and the restriction and tying of the seduction, strictly, to a Baudrillardian sense on the other.

Though any extensive critical engagement with Lamb's proposed thesis is well beyond the scope of this introduction, a few points must be made. Regardless of the fact that the axiomatics of seduction do not hold for, and fail to account for, a considerable number of events and relations in Barker's plays, Equally noteworthy is that the so-called moments of wrong decision, or irrationality, are not solely impelled by seductive motivations or purposes. As expounded below, there are at least four crucial idiosyncrasies of Barker's work that are saliently at variance with the principles of seduction theory as advanced by Baudrillard and appropriated by Lamb.

First, there is love (like that between Gertrude and Claudius or that between Katrin and Starhemberg) which, however streaked with certain complications and contradictions in Barker, defies the terms of seduction theory, since the seductive relation by definition excludes the kind and degree of responsibility/responsivity, self-exposure, and self-sacrifice entailed in love. Secondly, there occur actual, material productions - more strictly, productive alterations, that is, creative, transformative changes in the real sense of the word, to wit, affecting one's embodied subjectivity, language, perception (of self, the other, and reality), and mode of (inter-subjective) relationality - in Barker's work (all in the throes of the liminal relations and limit events, such as during inter-corporeal moments of proximity, intimacy, and transcription of affective traces, corporeal schemas and figural patterns). "Seduction," however, in principle opposes the notion of production. Indelibly linked with this attribute, there is the failure not only to accommodate the temporality of such an *aesthetics of transversal becoming* (and self-transcendence and self-cultivation), but the ethics of heteronomous exposure to the Outside or the Other. For instance, Lamb neglects some of the concomitant aspects of Seduction theory which are incompatible with central preoccupations of Barker's characters' acts of (ethical) self-transcendence and self-

overcoming in inter-subjective proximal relations. "Narcissism,"[26] as an inextricable facet of seduction theory and seductive relation defined accordingly, is a prominent case in point which precludes transgressive sacrifice, evental proximity, and death as the aporetic experience of proximity with absolute exteriority or radical alterity. In this regard, a play such as *I Saw Myself* which acutely delves into the intricacies of narcissism, subjectivity (of the artist) and the ethical complications inherent in the attainment of autonomy and the elusive boundaries between autonomy and sovereignty can be posed as a resounding counterposition to Lamb's claim.

Thirdly, seduction fails to account for the personal history of the embodied individual and his/her psycho-somatic genealogy, that is, the affective traces, corporeal schemas ideas, modes of relationality, and configurations of desire and sensibility which are embedded in the individual (and subconsciously or compulsively inform and determine the boundaries and conception of selfhood and relationality) from previous relationships and stages of life, which s/he thus carries them into other eventful occurrences, thereby affecting or complicating the next relationships and events. The reason underlying this is Seduction theory's assumption of transplantation or transposition of characters into a-historical seductive situations which strips them off their personal traits and history. Hence, in the seductionist approach the crucial moments of reversion or retrogression which befall many Barkerian protagonists (such as Lvov) in moments of climax or crisis are ignored. But also one of the chief paths to the exploration of the contradictions and complication – to wit, psychoanalysis - is disavowed and refuted.[27] Consequently, the whole dialectical tension and dynamics between the past and present (various layers of the self; not necessarily involving surface-depth binary and metaphysics) is overlooked.

Fourthly, the seductionist approach is incapable of providing and/or explaining the critical stance and negative distance that is required to be maintained by the character towards assimilationist or totalitarian veins informing the discursive strategies, imperatives and meta-narratives in order to preserve its autonomy (as seduction inherently involves contamination and self-loss).

[26] The following passage shows the role of narcissism in Baudrillard's idea of seduction (see *Seduction* 68).

[27] Lamb couches his claims that Barker's characters inhabit a universe that functions in ways that differ from the so-called reality in Baudrillardian terms thus: "A universe that can no longer be interpreted in terms of psychic or psychological relations, nor those of repression and the subconscious, but must be interpreted in the terms of play, challenges, duels, the strategy of appearances—that is, the terms of seduction" (7).

To deduce one of the implications of Lamb's claim, we appropriate a catoptric trope deployed by Baudrillard himself in his explanation of the dynamics of seduction, and observe that moments of irrationality and contradiction in Barker, in Lamb's view, resemble mirrors whose surface presage an underlying depth but are in truth "superficial abysses" or "depthless profundities" (see *Seduction* 53-118). In other words, there is no meaning, intentionality (whether subconscious or unselfconscious), and significance or sense underlying such moments; they are in fact only strategies in a game; a wild and infinite play of signifiers, deceptive moves and blinding reflection for misleading the other in a game of mirrors.

The second critical trend, as mentioned above, is the Nietzschean one which, though lacking a chief representative, has been variously pursued by different commentators and critics, including David Barnett (2001), Rabey (2009), Liz Tomlin (2000; 2006) and Heiner Zimmermann (1999). Already in his afterword to *Arguments,* Rabey (1989) calls Barker an "aesthetic-existentialist theorist who dares to match the disturbing power of Wilde, Nietzsche and Sartre" (229), and yet neither in this essay nor in his book-length study of Barker's early theatre does he elaborate upon this assertion at all. Zimmermann specifically focuses on Attic tragedy and Nietzsche (and Aristotle) and compares their expounded models of tragedy to that of Barker though without exemplifying his argument by from tragic plays themselves [28]. David Barnett is the first critic to have consistently undertaken the exposition of the Nietzschean facets of Barker's drama. I have partly dealt with the second trend (the Nietzschean), and Barnett in particular, in Chapter 2.

As regards the third critical strand (the Adornian), I have tackled and analysed its premises at length in the conclusion to Chapter 3.

Chapter Synopsis and the Structure of the Thesis

This thesis, in its manner of forging relation between the key issues at stake, transpires as a tapestry woven out of four main strands: the evental moments of self-transcendence and becoming-other, the proximal moments of heteronomous relationship with the Other, moments of proximity to

[28] See Heiner Zimmermann. 1999. "Howard Barker's Appropriation of Classical Tragedy" In *(Dis)Placing Classical Greek Theatre.*, edited by Savas Patsalidis and Elizabeth Sakellaridou. Thessaloniki: University Studio Press.

death, and the undertaking an aporetic experience of death through tragic transgression. The common guiding thread running in all four chapters is the probing of such aporetic moment in Barker's plays under consideration. Accordingly, the focal points in the first three chapters are ambivalent/equivocal and overdetermined figures - namely, voice/cry, the skin, and cunt-castle (in conjunction with anatomy-morphology) that embody the (chiasmatic, proximal, aporetic) mode of being, becoming, and relating.

Chapter 1 is dedicated to the analysis of *Gertrude-The Cry*. *Gertrude-The Cry* appears as the most consistent depiction of Barker's poetics of transgression through pervasive acts and moments of proximal desire, eroticism and sacrifice, culminating in the aporetic moment of the Gift of Death between Claudius and Gertrude. Hardly any other play dramatizes so starkly the nature of ecstasy, erotic desire, and sacrifice on the one hand, and the tensions and contradictions inhering the pairs, aporetically related in Barker, such as physical-metaphysical, sacred-profane, immanence-transcendence, and autonomy-heteronomy. All the foregoing are brought into relief through the figure of the cry which constitutes the centrifugal (non-)centre of *Gertrude-The Cry*. Accordingly, by proposing the concept of the acousmatic, I shall argue that, in *Gertrude*, it is the voice/cry that features as the pivotal figure. What renders *Gertrude* emblematic among Barker's plays, many of which intensely probe analogous issues, for exploring his roots in the European philosophically-inflected avant-garde is how explicitly it reveals Barker's vision of modes of relationality and subjectivity, particularly in moments of extremity and crisis; in conjunction with the manner and frequency in which the pivotal concerns and topoi of this tradition come to converge with an exemplar density and poetic intensity in this play.

Chapter 2 takes *The Europeans* as its primary focus. It is my argument here that the main concerns and problematics of the play are most effectively captured and broached through two phenomena which permeate the play: pain and skin (both of which evince a chiasmatic structure and function). In *The Europeans*, pain (along with evental love) features as the main impetus in the aesthetics and ethics of the embodied self in its *relation* with the other. This pain, nonetheless, as I will attempt to establish, is not restricted to the level of sheer physical pain, and crucially involves pain in a particular ontological, epistemological and ethical sense. By the same token, I posit pain to occasion both intense immanentization (individuation) and transcendence (super-individuation). In the same vein, the skin appears in two double-edged functions: the symptomatic-pathological and the evental-therapeutic. In other words, the skin, in *The Europeans*, transpires

both as the medium (and physical, material, affective space) in/through which "pain" expresses itself and the skin as a vector for transcending such pathological-symptomatic conditions As such the skin serves as a medium for, and emerges in a new mode out of, the realization of moment of proximity between Starhemberg (beset with melancholia-narcissism) and Katrin (suffering from hysteria). The thrust of the argument, thus, is my proposed notion of 'the third skin' or 'the skin of proximity' which argues for both of foregoing processes (of immanentization and transcendence) to be realized in an intercorporeally fabricated and emergent space, concretized primarily in terms, and in the medium, of *skin*.

Chapter 3 concentrates on *The Castle*, Barker's most conspicuous engagement with the discourses of feminism and phallogocentrism (both, though variously, as modes of identity-thinking) on the one hand, and an ethics of alterity and proximity driven by an existential mode oriented to infinity rather than totality. *The Castle* vividly illustrates the manner, in Barker, in which one's ethics (that is, one's embodied mode of existence and manner of dwelling coupled with one's mode of relating to oneself and to the Other) and morality (a transcendental set of values and normative rules for action) profoundly affect one's ontology, and is reflected in one's conceptions of politics, theology, and temporality. Equally significant, *The Castle* is included here because it features as one of the paradigmatic plays in which body (in its various guises and manifestations: pain, desire, pregnancy, eroticism, gender politics) forms the fulcrum of the play both literally and figurally. Initially, I will demonstrate how the male dominant discourse (as presented in *The Castle*) is a phallogocentric discourse premised on the pursuit of *ontology*, *identity* and *totality*. Then, I will proceed to illustrate that this phallogocentric discourse owes its abiding dominance to the exclusion and abjection of *the proximal*. The second principal section involves the pursuit of the trajectory of phallogocentric rationality and morality throughout the play, the ambivalent apotheosis of which is Krak (in conjunction with Stucley) and his correlate: the castle. Accordingly, I will examine Krak's tension-ridden "hyper-dialectical" interplay with the proximal forces (embodied, in the play, by Ann) and the manner in which he undergoes an upheaval from a downright disregard of the Other to a self-exposure and the essentiality of the apprehension of proximity/femininity.

The Fourth Chapter strictly addresses the question of death in Barker by focusing on *Ego in Arcadia* in particular coupled with the depiction of death in the entirety of his corpus. *Arcadia*

can hardly be matched, or superseded with, any other plays by Barker when it comes to the question of death; it indeed occupies a unique position in his oeuvre as regards the nature of death, its structural and thematic centrality, as well as the mode of its representation. Barker's oeuvre abounds in plays which are preoccupied with death and replete with contemplations of and reflections on death; what distinguishes *Arcadia* and renders it a paradigmatic example of my argument is primarily *the absence, or, more correctly, the impossibility, of death.* The thrust of the argument in Chapter 4 is that death, as depicted by Barker in *Arcadia*, is aporetic (emerging as the impossibility of possibility) demonstrating, on the one hand, the indispensable role of death in subjectivation of the individual and attainment of the authenticity of through an existential aesthetics, and yet on the other its undermining of a sovereign autonomy or authenticity due to its radical alterity, inassimilability and non-domesticability. The subtle ways through which death is used and abused for the fabrication of a stable and integral self (as dramatized in the play) will be examined too. This aporetic condition, nonetheless, will be shown to inform *Arcadia* on three other planes too. Relatedly, *Arcadia* reveals most perceptibly the manner Barker's work operates at the nexus of aesthetics and philosophy (ontology) by invoking questions regarding the origin of the artwork, the relation between real world and the world of the artwork, (and attendant questions of representation (of death and transgression), self-reflexivity (mise-en-abime), aesthetic autonomy, and moral speculation). It is one the few Barker works that offers his visions of heterotopia and lays bare the ineluctable paradoxes inherent therein. Intimately linked with the preceding issues is the question of melancholia which is demonstrated to be of structural and ontological significance in Barker. I extensively delve into the role and facets of the question of melancholia (as a spiritual-creative condition of possibility) striving to shed light on the abstruse last scene of the play.

CHAPTER TWO

Noli Me Tangere:

The Efflorescence of the Third Skin in the Torsions of Pain

in Howard Barker's *The Europeans*

Noli Me Tangere:

The Efflorescence of the Third Skin in the Torsions of Pain

in Howard Barker's *The Europeans*

"To be in one's skin is an extreme way of being exposed" (Levinas, *Otherwise than Being* 89)

"The need to lend a voice to suffering is the condition of all truth" (Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* 17-8)

"Thus morality is created in art, by exposure to pain and the illegitimate thought" (Barker, *Arguments* 47).

Introduction

This study is the first to consider and investigate the role and significance of the skin in Howard Barker's work. Skin features prominently in Barker's work. The skin is here demonstrated to embody a twofold or double-edged functions: the symptomatic-pathological and the aesthetic-ethical (or therapeutic). On this premise, it is my argument that the skin, as depicted in Barker, constitutes the materialist transcendental element (ontologically), or the ego ideal (psychosomatically); thus, in its both manifestations, it features as the condition of possibility for the aesthetic-ethic process of self-cultivation and self-overcoming, of the artistic act (of creation), and of creative imagination. Equally notably, the explication of various dimensions and functions of the skin, in Barker, poses a strong challenge to the dominant trend in Barker scholarship which either dismisses (or is profoundly sceptical of) or neglects the possibility of a psychoanalytical (though in a highly qualified sense) reading of Barker, particularly as regards attendant issues such as the unconscious, the role of the (m)Other, the heteronomous relational nature of individual autonomy, and personal history of the character.

Barker initiates his quasi-autobiographical account of the emergence of his artistic self and the evolution of his idiosyncratic style with an anecdote about his family, and the profession of the women in his family, which also includes an evocative focus on his mother and his fraught

relationship with her.[29] In a Genesis-like rhetoric and tone – as if to imply: in the beginning was the sheet – Barker entitles this opening section: "BEGINNING WITH THE WHITE SHEET" (*Style* 13). In this section, Barker recounts his reminiscences thus: "The women of his family had been laundresses and his mother wanted to wash... [...]" (Ibid). He proceeds to depict his mother in highly lyrical terms and, more specifically, in association with three issues: sheets, rinsing/laundering, and singing/laughing. Barker describes her thus: "She pegged great sheets on lines and the sheets cracked in the breeze... […] She *sang songs* from the war as she carried the basket on her hip her labour was pleasure she laughed at the wind and showed her teeth..." (Ibid). Barker's memories of his mother appear to be intensely erotically charged, particularly when placed in conjunction with his highly laden and suggestive indication of "her suffocating love" towards him, and with their intimate moments of hanging the sheets together with an intermittent exchange of laughter as a tacit token of seduction.

The pages following this anecdotal reference, are interspersed with references to the recurring instances of "sheets," "handkerchiefs," "aprons," and hanging cloths coupled with the acts of rinsing, washing, and laundering as such in Barker's plays, a fact that attests to how the sheet (be it smeared and stained or white/clean), both literally (as a folded/foldable surface) and as a trope, appears as an integral stage element in numerous of his plays. But, of more consequence, it transpires as an aesthetic feature of Barker's childhood which is embedded in him and his aesthetic ever since. This point is substantiated when he continues to elaborate on a relevant instance thus: "He wanted it to begin with the sheet, wet and heavy from the wash. He asked the actors to find the ends and to pull the sheet between them with short, co-ordinated movements to cause the creases to fall out before it could be suspended from the line" (*Style* 13). Furthermore, Barker talks of "the shock of cleanliness" on the stage; emphasizing how the white sheet has for him a perverse value, like the white bridal costume which demands to be desecrated in his rewritten *Women Beware Women*, or the dazzling white gown which is fouled in *Und* (see *Style*).

The implications and significance of this fusion of laughter, overdetermined fabric/cloth (handkerchief, sheet, etc.,), and inter-personal relationship can be further illuminated by reference to a couple of passages in *Death the One, and the Art of Theatre* where these three are linked

[29] The latter, in its own turn, lends credence to my argument (in Chapter 3) concerning the central/primal role of the mother, and corroborates my postulation of a prevalent (m)Other Principle in Barker's plays, while simultaneously revealing the biographical, or personal, roots and traces of this feature in Barker.

together through the issue of seduction: "What is the function of laughter in tragedy? Can we talk of a function in tragedy? Let us put it another way: how does laughter serve the experience of tragedy? By implicating us in its seductive process. It is a dropped handkerchief" (8). Elsewhere in the same book, there appears a similar constellation of elements evoking an interplay of component which opens up the possibility of an eventful encounter with the Other or new configuration of circumstances that might lead to the emergence of new dynamics and modes of perception and self-relation: "The dropped handkerchief: accident/intention / the beauty of a falling thing / white is a sign / I surrender / intimate as underwear / to retrieve it is to begin / impossible not to retrieve it /an obligation/excuse me/we both know/this will perhaps be fatal" (8).

Accordingly, it is my claim that, in Barker, there exists an integral intertwinement and affective-figural continuity between the white sheet, blank page/canvas (on which Barker writes and paints), and the skin. It is my argument that the triadic assemblage of sheet, paper/page/canvas and the skin is embedded in Barker (and his work) as a psychic envelope that subtends and sustains Barker the writer and Barker the person aesthetically, existentially, and ethically (more lucidly, bolstering the autonomy of the self and enabling the possibility of relating to the other in the mode of heteronomy). The sheer act of placing the aforementioned psych-biographical account at the forefront of his *A Style and Its Origins* lends credence and primacy to the important role the sheet (skin) and sheet (skin)-based relationship with the mother (and (m)Other) plays in the aesthetics and ethical-existential dimensions of Barker's work. As evident in the foregoing excerpts, sheet (-skin) is perceived as an affectively-charged, con-tactile space associated with inter-personal intimacy, the mother, and seduction. Hence, transpires as a third space between self/son and the (m)Other, fulfilling both anaclitic as well as libidinal-erotic functions of (re-)charging and discharging.

Equally noteworthy, what the figures share is their twofold character. What is common among the components of this triadic configuration is their featuring as a chiasmic, osmotic interface between self and the other for inter-corporeal and inter-affective interaction on the one hand, and the trans-cription and transference of affective traces, corporeal schemas, and figural patterns on the other. Predicated on this, the skin (of the mother), in Barker, constitutes the materialist transcendental element[30] (ontologically), or the ego ideal (psychosomatically) – in

[30] In its Deleuzian sense of transcendental empiricism.

whose both manifestations features as the condition of possibility for the aesthetic process and creative imagination. By the same token, it fulfils the three primary functions of the skin ego as elaborated by Anzieu: inscription, protection and maintenance. A substantial part of (extent) of the foregoing features/… find an emblematic or consonant illustration in *The Europeans*. In fact, highly analogous relationships are evidently observable between Starhemberg and Katrin, and Starhemberg and his mother.

When, impelled by the force of this initial provocation, we embark on chronicling the usage and dissemination of skin-rhetoric throughout Barker's texts, we soon discover that references to the skin are by no means infrequent within his work. Indeed, the skin proves to occupy an emblematic position in Barker on three counts: in the modality of relationality it embodies, the modality of subjectivity, transpiring as the figure of sensibility, hence illustrating, on a larger level, the nature and function of the corporeality in Barker's oeuvre. The borderline status and chiasmatic nature of the skin (hence its association with the abject and transgressive-liminal existential states below) is vividly reflected in the ensuing passage from *He Stumbled* in which enunciates (articulates) his heightened sensibility and sensitivity coupled with his vision into the melancholic nature of the world: "Nothing / Is lost on me / I am / Oh, misery / Oh, melancholy / Intuitive to an inordinate degree / My skin / So thin / I feel a thought alight on me / I feel the mothlike footsteps of a curse uttered in distant places" (273). In an essay on a character (Dancer) in *Hated Nightfall* Barker makes a revealing use of skin as the principal mode of sensibility. Here skin it invoked to express intense sensitivity and an acute historical and existential sensibility**:** "The dancer has the thinnest skin of any character I have invented. A thin skin is a painful condition the agonized condition of a thin skin…" (*Arguments* 179**).** In *Rome* the skin features as the allomorpth of undecidability par excellence and the space of subjective and inter-subjective possibilities. Accordingly, a parallel between the manifoldness of the skin and multiplicity of the self is evident. Holloo says: "I found another living underneath my skin. Also me. I found a different sheltering inside my bones. Also me" (*Rome* in *CP*2, 262). The skin is once more invoked in *Blok/Eko* to express the associations indicated above: the texture of the skin as the register of personal/existential sensibility and inter-affective and … traces. Here Tot states: "Blok knew more of dread than any man / his skin as you breathed a harsh word / trembled like a lake in winter / I said no speeches / a few / a few" (102). In the following excerpt from *(Uncle) Vanya* the skin is wielded as the space for intercorporeal proximity, of con-tactile co-implication, and non-

identificatory incorporation of the other. As Vanya asserts: "Tie him up if you want to, listen, listen I never wanted a single thing, one thing, more in my life than the nakedness of Helena and she also had me in her arteries, **I inhabited Helena** I was the skin under her skin I was the tenant of her brain and backbone and she undid her clothes not me she" (*CP 2*, 316)

The significance of the foregoing discussion (and the role of skin, sheet and tactility therein) and its bearing on Barker's dramatic work are more palpably perceived when we take into account the pivotal role the skin plays in the various dimensions of the human as demonstrated by psychoanalysis, neuroscience and philosophy. Skin – which is a "milieu" (as suggested by Serres; see Steve Connor 26-7), rather than merely a sensory organ, and the seat of tactile sensation, which, in its own right, is "the mother of all senses" (Montagu 1986) - is not only the largest sensory organ; but also - by virtue of its peculiar status: a envelope enclosing the essence of human (both physical and metaphysical, that is, psychical-spiritual), and an integument containing the visceral interior of the body, and a permeable membrane featuring both as a boundary between the inside and outside and allowing congress between the two dimensions - the skin has crucial, if sometimes conflicting, psychological, spiritual, and social functions.

In Howard Barker's *The Europeans* – set in the aftermath of the Siege of Vienna (1683) and the defeat of the Ottoman Empire - pain and suffering play a pivotal role in the dynamics of the self, and in the tensions and interactions between the self and the other[31]. Though the (belated) role of love cannot be disregarded in this play, pain features as the main impetus in the aesthetics and ethics of the embodied self in its *relation* with the other. This pain, nonetheless, as I will seek to demonstrate, is not restricted to the level of sheer physical pain, and crucially involves pain in a particular ontological, epistemological and ethical sense: suffering within the bounds of the self, suffering from being confined under one's own skin, and suffering from the im-possibility of, or the deficiency of the medium for, relating to the other. Given the role and the significance of pain in *The Europeans*- where a victim of the war gives birth on stage - and the manner the main characters treat, interpret, and wield their own and others' pain, I take it to occasion both intense immanentization (individuation) and transcendence (super-individuation).

[31] I am deploying the term "the Other" in the sense articulated in Levinasian ethics (to wit, the singular human individual in a face-to-face relation with the self) throughout the article, unless otherwise stated.

The thrust of the argument, thus, is my proposed notion of 'the third skin' or 'the skin of proximity' which argues for both foregoing processes (of immanentization and transcendence) to be realized in an intercorporeally fabricated and emergent space, concretized primarily in terms, and in the medium, of *skin*. *Skin*, as intended here, designates the foremost mode of subjective and inter-subjective sensibility and relationality, and the compelling necessity for composing such a conceptual notion in tackling the crucial concerns and issues of the play, derives from the prevalent yet rather tacit dimensions of skin in the play. Accordingly, in the following chapter, drawing on Anzieu's (and Freud's) respective notions of skin ego and bodily ego, I will argue that in a rough correspondence, Starhemberg's self-conception (in terms of skin ego) can be deemed as a narcissistic (yet melancholic) envelope and Katrin's as a hysterical envelope of suffering. Qualifying Anzieu's proposed antithetical notions (of narcissistic envelope and envelope of suffering), however, it is my contention that, as evident in Barker's nuanced rendition, these two envelopes (as regards the play and the characters) are not mutually exclusive but partake of and permeate each other. I will argue that, in the trend of the play, both Katrin and Starhemberg by 'undergoing and undertaking' their pains in an affirmative manner gain insight into a more authentic self and achieve self-overcoming, exposition (or more accurately, "ex-peausition" (*Corpus* 32-3)) and alter-ation in proximity to the other.

Subsequently, predicating part of the argument on Nietzsche's and Levinas' ideas concerning the relation between ethics and pain, I will argue that this aesthetic process (of strained individuation) does not cease here but culminates in an ethical moment (of impassioned super-individuation). In this eventful moment, Starhemberg partially and provisionally abandons his former self (his narcissistic-melancholic skin-ego) and Katrin relinquishes her habituated self (her hysterical skin-ego). In the throes of this chiasmatic con-tactility in the form of a haptic gaze, each in his/her own turn *gives skin (*or *flesh*) to the other, the manifestation of which is the opening up and formation of a 'skin' between them which I would call 'the third' or 'the proximal skin' which effects a notable alteration in the existential and ethical dynamics of their selfhoods. This event, however, is paradoxically followed by a profoundly ambivalent moment, in terms of ethics: the moment of the exclusion of the infant.

My theoretical move in juxtaposing psychoanalytical and philosophical discourses stems from the demands and complications of Barker's play, not least the fact that the psychopathological

and ethico-existential ramifications of pain, and the relation to alterity, coexist and traverse one another in the main characters, throughout *The Europeans*.

The Alterity of the Event in *The Europeans*

The Europeans (1987) depicts the collision and intersection of moments in *chronological* history (history as determined and defined by the meta-narratives imposed by ideological imperatives – including transcendent meaning and teleological trend - and the moral norms of the symbolic discourse) and, what Giorgio Agamben terms, *kairological*[32] history (or what Barker himself has called anti-History)[33]. In Barker's drama, such a kairological history, or untimely moments of the event[34], represents the disruption or fragmentation of those grand- and meta-narratives by the intervention and testimony of narratives provided by individual acts of transgression, counter-narrative, anamnesis, and the relation between the self and the singular, individual other. Those dramatic events are articulated in a context of pain, love, and tragic knowledge, while all three are invariably traversed with ideology. As such, the characters who inhabit the world of *The Europeans* (in the socio-historical circumstances they find themselves in, and in their mode of relation to them) conform to Barker's characterization of Europeans: "To be European is to hold to opposites and live, if not rejoice, in the contradictions [...] The individual and the collective are never more embattled than they are here, and reconciliation is impossible [...]. It is perpetual oscillation, and all talk of harmony is false, a self-deception" (Barker, in Brown 129-130; see also Brown 117, 86)[35].

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[32] The distinction between *chronological* as the time of pseudo-history and the *kairological* as the time of authentic history as two opposite modes of temporality or approaches to history, wielded here, is made by Giorgio Agamben in his *Infancy and History*. See *Infancy* 104-5.

[33] For the first instances of the appearance of this dichotomy, see the subtitle to Barker's *The Power of the Dog*. Later the antithetical categorization is reiterated by Dancer in *Hated Nightfall* (*Plays Five*, 33). Also see Rabey's comments in *Essays*18.

[34] I am deploying the term "event" primarily in the sense articulated by Deleuze, but also with a view to Badiou's use and definition of the term. In Deleuze, to put it rather briefly, events are primarily events of sense, or that of productions of sense ("We will not ask therefore what is the sense of the event: the event is sense itself. The event belongs essentially to language; it has an essential relationship to language. But language is what is said of things" (*Logic of Sense* 22; see also 3, 72).

[35] In fact, analogous non-synthetic (negative) dialectics and tension-laden dynamics persist to inform and are vividly detectable in some of Barker's other plays, such as *Victory*, *The Power of the Dog*, *The Castle*, *The Bite of the Night*, *The Gaoler's Ache*, *Fence in its Thousandth Year*, and *Ecstatic Bible* among others.

The Europeans exposes its pock-marked and crumpled skinscape to us at a time when Austria has just vanquished the Turks and released itself from their colonial grip. This triumph has chiefly been achieved through the display of intrepidity and military ingenuity by the commander, Starhemberg. There are four other main characters in the play. Katrin is a war victim who has been raped, disfigured, and impregnated by Turkish soldiers; she inexorably undertakes an array of disruptive and provocative public acts to publicize her pain and traumatic state. In fact, by resolving to construct "her life around the unforgiving" (Barker, in Brown 193), she turns herself into a "Screaming Exhibit" in the post-war "Museum of Reconciliation" (Ibid 61); and, thus, she embodies a "negativity" which challenges, and remains heterogeneous to, the Idea, the modern State, the dialectical synthesis, and teleological sublation by History (see Kristeva 1984, 107-127). Crucially, Barker makes Katrin's overdetermined body and her child "a ground for struggle between State and private will" (Barker, in Brown 176) in which the former strives to diffuse the negativity of pain, contradiction, and inassimilable individual anomaly.

Alongside these protagonists Barker adds Orphuls, an unorthodox priest who is preoccupied with evental possibilities of re-fabricating one's self and a new ethics released in the aftermath of catastrophe. He is also concerned with the manifestation of the contingency of moral truths and social conventions, culminating in his disavowal of Christ and his creed. In his quest for self-transcendence and becoming-other, which is precipitated by Starhemberg's provocations, Orphuls embarks on a series of transgressive acts, culminating in the murder of his mother (for which he is charged and later executed). And, finally, there are Leopold, the head of the Austrian state, and his wife, the Empress, who strive for the restoration of socio-cultural, political, and moral order through conciliatory (yet systematic) measures. What distinguishes Leopold and the Empress as rather eccentric figures of authority (and can be regarded as one of Barker's idiosyncrasies in endowing almost all his characters with varying degrees of complexity) is their explicit interest in the aesthetics of self and their apparent sharing - with occasional acuity and empathy - of the existential concerns of the protagonists. One of the subtle differences between the Empress and Leopold is that, whereas she is less conventional, more receptive, and more audacious in yearning for novelty and possibility, he is more inclined to be conventional, self-centered, and authoritarian.

The tragic vision of *The Europeans* - in conformity with Barker's aesthetic principles of contradiction, pragmatic speculation on the impossible, affirmative negativity, différential openness to the other and the event, and non-subsumptive individual autonomy - is manifest in its

repudiation of any climactic moment of Aristotelian catharsis or Hegelian reconciliation. This is epitomized in the restitution of Katrin's child, symbolically christened "Concilia" by the State, despite the apparent irrationality of the act and the harrowing pain suffered by Katrin. As regards the structure of the play, in contrast to such plays as T*he Power of the Dog* and *The Last Supper*, in which these two orders - the historical-ideological and the individual-interpersonal - run formally and thematically parallel, with rare intersections; the structure of *The Europeans*, I would suggest, is akin to a möbius strip, in that, those orders/layers never cease to imbricate and implicate one another in this play. As such, the actions of the characters assume double significance and dimensions: simultaneously socio-political and existentio-ethical. Tellingly, as will be borne out more explicitly in the course of the ensuing discussion, this möbius-strip structure, on the formal and thematic levels, tellingly proves congruent with the inherently möbius-like (or chiasmic) structure of the pivotal figure of *The Europeans*: the skin.

To discuss them separately for the sake of clarity, on one layer, we observe the implacable efforts made by Emperor Leopold, in conjunction with his wife, to reconstitute socio-political discipline and cultural and moral order, including the reinstatement of institutions, not least the arts and medicine. Judging by the principles and criteria Leopold promotes in the course of the play - coupled with his ideological methods and attitudes deployed for the establishment of harmony, homogeneity, solidarity through tolerance, subsumptive cohesion and reconciliation - he can be identified as representing a liberal-humanist and nationalist European identity/authority.

On the other layer, there are primarily the conqueror Starhemberg and the war victim Katrin (along with some other characters, including Orphuls) who feature prominently. Their distinguishing trait resides in their dual positions and moves in the play, saliently reflected in their alternation between the centre and the periphery, or the inside and outside, simultaneously.

In their unremitting endeavor to detach themselves from the centre of power, by refusing to settle into the discursive positions assigned by Leopold's emergent discourse -they not only refuse the redemptive meanings provided by salvific narratives of collective-traditional wisdom, but try to thwart ideological schemes for the annexation of their pain, individual experience and autonomy conducted chiefly through the meaning-endowing processes of rationalization and institutionalization, mainly based on the morality of the discourse of transcendent idealism (of religion) or that of (collective or State) humanism. In so doing, by persisting in retaining their pain

and their individual tackling of the ramifications of the personal narrative (invariably riddled with contradictions), they strive to retain their existential-ethical authenticity, autonomous singularity and the eventfulness of the event.

Barker reflects this tension textually - through the characters' use of uppercase and lowercase to differentiate between the two senses of history at issue here, and to valorize one over and above the other. In the scene of Katrin's public parturition, Leopold, holding Katrin's new-born baby in hand, in a speech act of interpellation (instituting the child as an ideological-historical symbol) declares: "What history spoiled, let History mend. I christen her— Concilia!" (103). By the same token, the ensuing assertion by Starhemberg captures the tension-laden relation between two layers at stake: "How do we escape from History? We reproduce its mayhem in our lives..." (115). This negative dialectical tension is equally cogently captured in Katrin's riven state. Earlier she asseverates her existential will over (chronological) history by saying: "HOW DID I PERISH, I WAS MADE" (95); and this personal (kairological) history reaches a climactic point when she gives birth to the baby and affirms: "I bring you hope. I bring you History" (102). And yet, this is later counterpointed by her lament: "They cheated me [...] And made of my horrors reconciliation [...] History [in the ideological-chronological sense] they made of me" (104).

In addition to the foregoing key incidents, two other momentous events transpire as critical junctures in *The Europeans*.

The first turning point is the moment of encounter between Katrin and Starhemberg – where, in a willed gesture of intimate contact, they sit stark naked opposite each other merely gazing at one another; a moment which features as the culmination of their pursuit of existential-ethical authenticity, their excoriating struggles to love, and their ostensibly paradoxical quest for self and overcoming of the self.

The play's second turning point is the return of Katrin's child Concilia to the Turkish Commander at the border. In fact, though Concilia was the child of "impeccable origins" (114) - considering the ordeals Katrin underwent: rape, her public parturition (which she intends it simultaneously as a transgressive spectacling of pain, a socio-political disruption, and the salient testimony to her existential-ethical will), and her eventual determination to keep it - the baby is gradually assimilated by the State and turned into an overdetermined and over-inscribed sign - a national symbol and an ideological catalyst - by the dominant discourse. Starhemberg's remark

vividly captures this: “Concilia, whose forehead is a little swamp of Imperial kisses, and whose ears are tiny basins of kind sentiment” (114). Consequently, the child is returned with the intention of thwarting the chronological History and its concomitant characteristic - the grand-narrative of progress operating through sublational synthesis (of the antithetical term or the other, here, embodied in Concilia) - coming full circle; in other words, they tackle it to prevent what Starhemberg (compare Barker’s own characterization of Europe) terms “the great chaos of this continent” (114) being resolved into an administered order and homogeneity. What renders this act of ideological and historical subversion tragic is that it entails inflicting a traumatizing pain and loss on oneself, that is, on the transgressive individual him/herself. Subsequently, despite Katrin’s intense intransigence, Starhemberg convinces her and gives the child to the Turkish Commander. When, distraught, she wonders why they should make such an agonizing self-sacrifice, Starhemberg, corroborating our discussion about the primacy of inter-personal preoccupations in *The Europeans*, describes this apparently cruel act of returning the child an act of consecration of their tragic, transgressive and proximal love, and to be propelled by love. He replies: “Because we must love each other, now” (116). Thus, the final scene, by epitomizing such tragic irreconcilability - constitutes a double-edged moment of catastrophe (affecting both the self and the socio-symbolic order) rather than catharsis. Barker offers a moment of complication rather than resolution, in the sense that it complicates the common conceptions of truth, love, aesthetics of selfhood, and fidelity to the event. Thus, on the ontological, structural, and narrative levels, *The Europeans* evidently resists closure.

Nonetheless, it is the second layer I have delineated above – the subjective (the characters’ existential-ethical preoccupations) and intersubjective dimensions - which forms the fulcrum of this study. It is to this second layer that we now turn.

The Europeans and Its Critical Literature

Notwithstanding Barker’s self-proclaimed preoccupation with the play *The Europeans* and his identification of it as the first fully-fledged and paradigmatic example of his Theatre of Catastrophe - “I have consistently identified THE EUROPEANS as the first of the Catastrophic plays, not only

from its narrative inception in a crisis of order but from the insistence of the protagonist on privileging personal instinct over cultural discipline" (Barker 2009)[36] – yet scant critical attention has hitherto been paid to the play. There have been only two extended engagements with *The Europeans,* by David Ian Rabey (1988) and David Barnett (2001). Both readings derive the critical terms and premises of their analysis mainly from the existential aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy, though they apply them to establish opposite conclusions: the former a sympathetic and affirmative reading, the latter a trenchantly critical one.

Rabey's pioneering engagement with *The Europeans* was mainly expository and, as a result, it hardly delves into the more psychological and philosophical implications and dimensions of the play. Theoretically, he, implicitly, demonstrated the primacy of certain Nietzschean characteristics in Barker's protagonists, including transgressive self-creation and the pursuit of authenticity, coupled with the defiance and subversion of ideological institutions, all through a relentless insistence on self-sufficiency (see Rabey 1988, 229-242).

Taking his point of departure implicitly from Charles Lamb (see 459) and explicitly from Rabey (458), David Barnett proposed to pursue a sustained Nietzschean reading, though he reached a conclusion opposite to Rabey's. Barnett contends that 'self' in *The Europeans* is a solid unit, characterized by sovereignty and authenticity in an essentialist sense (461). Accordingly, he regards the emphasis Barker lays on the spontaneous action, autonomous volition and self-expression of the individual as a retrogressive movement "remarkably reminiscent of earlier historical manifestations, associated with the bourgeois individualism of the nineteenth century" (463). He hints at Barker's neglect of the significant fact that individualism, along with such a centrality accorded to the individual and its ostensible a-historicity in Barker, can in a self-defeating manner turn out to be an ideological institution in itself. And, hence, he recognizes such a predilection as liable to being evocative of, and latently complicit with, (neo-)liberal tenets and bourgeois values. Eventually, he proceeds to posit that Barker fails to address two significant points which are, ironically, among the dramatist's recurrent and fundamental themes: "the role of the body and the non-essentialist theories of identity" (Ibid). Indeed, Barnett's reading is

[36] Both excerpts are from "The Sunless Garden of the Unconsoled" given as a paper at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, July 10, 2009. This copy in conjunction with a series of other essays and lectures, delivered preceding and subsequent to it, were kindly provided by Howard Barker to the author. This paper has recently been included in a collection of articles on Barker's theatre. See *Howard Barker and the Art of* Theatre (2014). Eds. D. I. Rabey and S. Goldingay Manchester University Press. Pp. 207-11.

symptomatic: it reveals, at best a lacuna, and at worst a flaw, in the currently prevalent Barker scholarship – particularly its conception of Barkerian selfhood -, since it corroborates how a crucial, yet hitherto-overlooked, dimension of self/subjectivity in Barker might be misconstrued or misrepresented.

As will become evident in the following discussion, I take issue with several of Barnett's claims on various counts not least his assertion that Barker conceives of the individual subjectivity as a sovereign, essentialist, ahistorical, and disembodied unit, or put otherwise, as a hypostatized identity (463). If we scrutinize the language, interactions and characteristic conduct of the characters, we discern that almost all of Barker's plays abound in instances that clearly run counter to and problematize Barnett's claims. I would contend that this self is characterized by heteronomous becoming, intercorporeal relationality, multiplicity, and self-difference; in short, it is *a self as (a heteronomously autonomous) relationality* and *a self in relation to singular alterity* (as expounded in Levinas' ethics of the other) and a self-in-process/crisis. Equally crucial, it is the former idiosyncrasy (the relational nature of the self, yet so solely in relation to a singular, individual other in a catastrophic condition) which is flagrantly absent in the critical studies carried out by the critics in the "Seduction strand" (including Lamb, Rabey and other fellow critics that adhere to and draw on this trend) or those (such as Karoline Gritzner) whose work takes as its focal point the individual in, or in pursuit of, "sublime" states, and partly inflected with Adornian notions. In the former strand in particular, even when the inter-subjective aspect of the characters is recognized, it occurs as such solely in terms of seduction and its dynamics. Thus, this study intends to restore this dimension and establish its essential role.

The other equally crucial issue concerns the (partly) psychoanalytically-inflected approach to Barker's work. The dominant trend of criticism in Barker scholarship (including figures such as Lamb, Rabey, Gritzner, and even Barnett) is highly sceptical towards all claims to truth (even in a non-metaphysical, evental sense and on a personal or interpersonal level) with respect to Barker's work and characters, and hence, it either explicitly or implicitly dismisses the viability or pertinence of psychoanalytical approaches to Barker on the same ground. The postulation of anti-psychological nature of Barker's characters and plays and advocating their being un-susceptible to psychoanalytical readings, and, hence, the unviability with respect to both of them in the so-called postmodernist-oriented trends, however, have led to two pernicious consequences. First, there is the sheer neglect of the persistent presence and significance of the fraught role of the

mother in Barker. The recurrent figure of the mother, strikingly, has received almost no critical attention. And this reveals one of the blind spots, or pitfalls, of the "Seductionist", as it were, or postmodernist-oriented approaches to his plays. If we are to dismiss the (however contentious) insights offered by psychoanalysis, what should we make of the salient points such as the climactic moment in *The Fence in Its Thousandth Year* - when Photo realizes that his "aunt" with whom he has been literally in love, is in fact his mother, and tells her: "it is impossible to like you and impossible to dislike you … I ADORE YOUR TERRIBLE LYING I ADORE YOUR TERRIBLE TRUTH" (*Fence* 50). In this play, even more conspicuously, we witness Photo's not merely psychic, but actual physical regression to an earlier age (nearly infancy). In Scene 15, we see him, having been a precocious adolescent throughout the play, wrapped up in swaddling and wheeled round in a pram, rattle in hand, while exchanging erotic smiles with his mother/aunt who is in the throes of parturition pains (*Fence* 65-71). If we divested such drastic dramatic alterations and events of their overt psychosomatic associations, there would remain notable lacunae in our understanding of the genealogy of the body, the dynamics of desire, the aesthetics of the self-cultivation, and the ethics of becoming-other in Barker.

Indeed, the figure of the mother is so prevalent and assumes such a pivotal position in the majority of the plays (including *Hard Heart*, *The Europeans*, *The Ecstatic Bible*, *Gertrude-the Cry*, *Knowledge and a Girl*, *Brilliance of a Servant*, *Fence in Its Thousandth Year*, *The Gaoler's Ache for the Nearly Dead*, *Dead Hands*, *Animals in Paradise*, *Wonder and Worship in the Dying Ward*, and the latest yet unpublished plays[37], to mention only a few) to such an extent that, in Barker, I would contend, one should speak of the *Mother Principle* to the disappearance, diminution, or exclusion of the father and the Name of the Father. Whether perceived negatively (as an impediment to self-realization, or fabrication, or as an object of hatred and aversion to surpass or transcend) or positively (as an object of fixation, fascination and love), the mother transpires as a figure in whom characters make immense and intense psychosomatic investments and plays a prominent role in the aesthetics of the self and ethics of relationality with the other.

Secondly, one of Barker's most significant contributions to a constructive critique of capitalism and liberal-humanism (along with their promoted conceptions of selfhood, relationality,

[37] These three plays - *Distance* (2013), *Concentration* (2013), and *Dying in the Street* (2013) - were kindly supplied by Howard Barker to the author.

society, and life) resides in his treatment of domestic space, and the concomitant questions of desire, subject-formation and institutionality (along with libidinal and socio-political economy). Barker exposes the restraints inherent in the repressive grid of the family, with its familial identifications, sexual orientations, and self-formations coupled with its ideological, disciplinary, and normalizing effects as the breeding ground for the reproduction of the aforementioned ideologies. On the other hand, he drastically alters the triadic structure of the family by reconfiguring it into an open, dynamic, fluid, and porous space, which is always secondary to or derivative of the catastrophic circumstances, and is traversed by external (socio-political or historical) forces. Barker, that is, accords primacy to inter-personal relations - prominent among them that between the mother and the son - by decapitating the father and abolishing domesticity. Nevertheless, I believe, the real significance and scope (as well as their implications and ramifications) of these decisive undertakings (by Barker) and features (of the plays) cannot be plausibly accounted for without hints and insights derived from psychoanalysis, and from its critique through the critical approaches applied to it - most prominently the one conducted through Deleuze and Guattari's method of "schizoanalysis".

Though further investigation of this point is well beyond the scope of the present paper and its space constraints, it suffices to establish the argument that Barker's vision of the unconscious bears salient affinities with the volatile dynamics of the unconscious articulated by Deleuze and Guattari, (and also, viewed from another perspective, with the conception posited by Merleau-Ponty (*Visible* 180-1, 270) and D. Anzieu). In fact, the demonstration of this proposition enables us to realize and account for decisive issues in Barker's work such as the personal history and psycho-dynamics of his characters, the aesthetics of the self, the ethics of proximal relationality and becoming-other, and the operation and function of language itself.

The Event of Alterity

A. Traumatized Egos in Anguished Skins:

As indicated above, it is my contention that skin transpires as the pivotal figure (as the primary modality of sensibility, relationality, and subjectivity) of *The Europeans*. The skin, indeed, provides an illuminating perspective on the relation between pain, knowledge, speculation on morality, and the unconscious in the play. As such, it features both as the critical locus for the

articulation of underlying cause of certain obsessions, disturbances and complications besetting the characters with respect to the existential (personal) and ethical (interpersonal) problematics, and as the vector for the pursuit of an aesthetics of self-cultivation and an ethics of self-transcendence in relation to the other. Thus, the skin fulfils three distinct functions in *The Europeans*: etiological, symptomatological, and therapeutic. Accordingly, in this section, initially I will limn the premises of Anzieu's theory of the skin ego in broad strokes, as it constitutes the theoretical core of my argument and will underpin the discussion throughout the article. Then I will immediately proceed to undertake a close reading of the play while probing the relevance of his theory to the concerns of the play.

Freud posited the understanding of the individual's experience of somatic self as indispensable to the understanding of his psychic structure. Accordingly, proposing body as the ground of mental functioning constituted the crux of Freud's conception of the development of the ego and the psychic apparatus in general. As he explicitly states, "the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego [...] it is not merely a surface entity but it is itself the projection of a surface" (Freud 1923: 26). In other terms, the most nascent form of self-representation is primarily a body representation, derived from proprioception and the experiences of pain and pleasure (see Freud 1923: 26). Anzieu's theory, correspondingly, is premised on the central importance of the body to the psychic life; and, thus, substantially elaborating Freud's insights, he proceeds to conceptualize his own approach primarily in terms of skin: "Psychic space and physical space constitute each other in reciprocal metaphors […] skin-ego is one of these metaphors" (Anzieu 1990, 58 in Segal 44; see also *Skin Ego* 28).

Building on and extending Freud's notion of 'bodily ego,' and also developing Esther Bick's, Wilfred Bion's, and Donald Winnicott's ideas, Anzieu postulates that the ego is primarily structured as a 'skin ego' or as a *psychic envelope*. In his definition of the term, skin ego is a mental image of the self derived from its experience of the surface of the body which the ego of the child relies on and wields during the early phases of its psycho-somatic development "to represent itself as an ego possessing psychical contents" (1990, 63). At its inchoate stage, 'skin ego' is represented as an imaginary outer membrane or case that embraces the whole of the psychical apparatus akin to the way skin enfolds the body. Anzieu advances the idea of the "common skin" as the skin imaginatively shared by, and enveloping, both mother and child. This *common skin* establishes an "adhesive identification" (Ibid, 63-4) between mother and child. The next stage of psycho-somatic

development consists in the abolition and partial interiorization of this common skin, which though strenuous, yet paves the way for the internalisation of, and identification with, a part of the mother that sustains the baby's physical and psychical development (Ibid, 41-45, 63-5, 147). Depending on the way this psychic process is undergone, Anzieu differentiates between two modes of skin ego: skin ego as a 'narcissistic envelope' (which fulfils a vital protective function and supplies the child with a sense of security) and skin ego as an 'envelope of suffering' (in which the protective function has been attenuated or stunted due to its being inscribed with a traumatic incidence) (29, 44, 200-210).

Now in the light of the foregoing theoretical discussions, I would like to draw on the above psychological model and move along its lines, as it helps us engage with Barker's *Europeans*, and, in particular, will allow us to deal with the problem that vexes critical analysis of the play, and also probe its pertinence to it. In order for the theoretical discussions posed above to be applicable to the analysis, however, as we will note, they are to be deployed with certain qualifications. Hence, the present analysis is not simply a straightforward case of 'applying' Anzieu and Levinas to Barker, but as I will establish, there are certain divergences between Anzieu's assumptions and Barker's practice particularly in relation to conceptions and the very necessity of parenthood, the attitude towards pain and its implications, as well as socio-political dimensions which will be dealt with in the course of the analysis.

Katrin has been raped and disfigured during the war by the Turks. This event has inflicted an indelible gash on her psycho-somatic schema, not to mention her body. This fragmentation is sorely vivid not only on a personal level (which includes two planes: the surface of her body - her abraded skin and the abject sight of her lacerated breasts, a loss to which she adverts as "irreparable and anatomical" (67) – and her mind: her traumatized sense of self or identity). It is also discernible on a social and inter-personal level; in the wake of this violation, her sense of self and ego-boundaries have become so tenuous and frail that she feels too exposed to stand the proximity of other persons and their communicative stimuli. Hence, she insists on their just gazing at her and refraining from any tactile contact with her.

However, as Prosser puts it: "Subjectivity is not just about having a physical skin; it is about feeling one owns it; it is a matter of psychic investment of self in skin" (73). By the same token, the trauma in Katrin has primarily been inscribed on the skin and registered in her sense of tactility.

This conscious, yet forced, investment at the level of skin is cogently evident in her statement: "I am frightened of everyone, especially you, and I would not be otherwise, I am so alive with fear, *I am skinless, I am flayed* and the nerves tremble on the slightest passage of a man like leaves on birches flutter at the poorest breeze" (95; italics mine). Now Anzieu's observation can help to unfold the implications of Katrin's remark; recognizing the skin(ego) as the space of "inter-sensorial inscription" (81, 104, 201), Anzieu proceeds to argue: "The seriousness of the damage to the skin … is in direct relation to the extent, both quantitative and qualitative, of the flaws in the Skin Ego" (35). Due to the loss of sense of being securely enveloped, she parries the approach of any other person, including Starhemberg and her sister. In fact, here, the cluster of words in Katrin's remark (prohibiting from touching, fear, skin, and nerves) is highly evocative of, and corresponds to, the constellation Anzieu forms when expounding the "intersensorial" function of skin-ego and its pathologies, by referring to the way both "skin" and the "central nervous system" simultaneously develop from "the ectoderm," adding how any defects in this function leads to the loss of a "common sense/space" and "the anxiety of the body being fragmented, or more precisely of it being dismantled" (104). However, we can realize the ambivalent implications of Katrin's state – her being flayed - more clearly, if we accommodate it in the light of Steve Connor's observation on flaying: "Flaying is always … accompanied by the possibility of a re-assumption: either the assumption of another skin, or the resumption of one's own skin (through healing)" (31).

The other relevant evidence of the registration of the trauma in the skin/tactility emerges when, on Starhemberg's following her persistently, she cautions him against approaching her too closely and 'touching' her: "You know you have a terrible face, *don't touch me* I would shudder if you *touched* me and some cry would issue from the very bottom of my gut like afterbirth sings in the grate or a green long screams" (95; italics mine). It is this recoiling from the least bodily contact on Katrin's part and her equation of being touched to being hurt or afflicted which is highly symptomatic. The grave psycho-somatic functional losses (of protection, containing, maintenance, inscription, intersensoriality/consensuality, and individuality) and assumption of a toxic/traumatic skin-envelope (that is, pain) for survival, evident in Katrin closely reflect, and can be accounted for, in light of some of the functions Anzieu has articulated for the skin ego (as well as the intimately linked concept of the psychic envelope). Anzieu identifies eight positive and one

negative function(s) for the skin ego which respectively include[38]: a function of maintaining the mind; a function of container: that of enveloping the whole of the psychic apparatus and libidinal/instinctual contents; a function of excitation screen; a function of individuation; a function of intersensoriality or con-sensuality, which leads to the construction of 'common sense'; a function of support for sexual excitation; a function of libidinal recharge; and finally, a function of inscribing tactile-sensorial traces.[39] And the ninth function, which is a negative function, emanating from the traumatic disturbances in, and hence inversion of, the normal ones, is the toxic function of self-destruction which was rejected later by Anzieu as a malfunction rather than a function. (1989: 122, 125, 127, 128 et passim). I will subject these to scrutiny further in relation to the play below.

If we inspect the snatches of the account Katrin gives of the details of her despoliation, we discern to what degree her language is saturated with tactile terms. Referring to the soldiers who assaulted her, she states: "They *soaked*, they *drenched*, they *swilled* me with their kisses, and *bruised* my lips and bit my *mouth* and thrust these thousand tongues into my throat" (68). The recurrence of the words laden with tactile associations in this excerpt demonstrates the primacy accorded to this sense and her conscious investment in it. The immediate sense that is evoked on listening to her account is that of skin as sieve or as a porous interface. Her subsequent rendition of the situation illustrates how she perceives the violators, above all, as an amorphous mass whose indefinite and impersonal touch is first and foremost tactilely felt rather than visually: "from now on I talk of them as plural, as many-headed, as many-legged and a mass of mouths" (67); and a few moments later, on adverting to her condensed imagery of them as "this many mouthed thing" - whose absorptive touch has been perceived as a liquid touch which dis-identifies the object of its reception – her speech falters and she nearly faints: "She shudders as if taken by a fit, emitting an appalling cry and sending the water flying" (68). Katrin also accentuates the point at issue by identifying her mouth not only as "holy" and "sacred," but as "the very shape and seat of intimacy" (Ibid); a hint from which can be inferred the indissociable relation and imbrications between orality and tactility in her speech and conduct pervasive throughout the play. Then, in an aggrieved tone, she proceeds to

[38] Though later he removes "toxic function of self-destruction" as solely a negative and pathological dysfunction.
[39] That is to say, tactile plus oral.

recount the manner her mouth was "smothered with *wet* and *fluid*" kisses.

No less revealing is her expression of the events in terms of flowing, overflowing and submersion which substantiates the extent to which her skin ego has languished both as a surface and an interface. The liquid, in which she has been immersed, has been corrosive and placed her in a liquid state which has searingly touched her away. Later, she emphasizes that the only parts of her which were not 'touched' by the Turk soldiers were her eyes: "None would look me in the eye, and I have such lovely eyes. Are my eyes so dangerous? No Turk did either … My eyes remain unravished … like unentered rooms" (79). Her depiction of her eyes as rooms, however, significantly illustrates how she apprehends her eyes, or her sense of sight, in terms of motility and tactility, rather than visuality. Such an apprehension is crucial as it illuminates the fraught and unorthodox nature of sight (that is, haptic and caressing) in the play, and contributes to our understanding of the penultimate scene in which the moment of *con/tactile aesth/ethics* (of simultaneous self-fabrication and self-transcendence) materializes when Katrin and Starhemberg sit facing each other without any visible tactile contact, their communication apparently confined to an exchange of gazes.

The other principal trait that confirms the pathological facets of Katrin's character is her evident hysterical (and histrionic) behaviours throughout the play. In Katrin, the psycho-somatic trauma has been projected both inwardly (embodied) and outwardly (phobia); and, hence, one can witness the indications of both kinds of hysteria distinguished by Freud - anxiety hysteria and conversion hysteria (Freud and Breuer 196-216) - explicitly in her recurrent self-dramatization; her unremitting pursuit of publicity through various public spectacles. Indeed, Katrin's is a spectacular body; and the compelling evidences to this proposition are her inexorable intention to have a public parturition in conjunction with her consent to, and actually pursuit of, being exposed to, recorded and archived by the medical-clinical discourse, though with the intention of disrupting the placidity and homogeneity of the collective social realm and asserting the uniqueness of her individual pain. Katrin displays many characteristic symptoms of hysteria in her actions and behaviour throughout the play, including permanent motor agitation, zonal confusion, erogenous diffusion, over-cathexis of the body (particularly oral and tactile zones), hyper-excitability, and hyper-sensitivity (see Micale 1995, Bronfen 1998, Mentzos 2000). Equally important is the heightened permeability of the border between body and language (or the semiotic and the symbolic) coupled with the cumulative proclivity towards conversion and re-inscription of the

psychic/symbolic onto the somatic/semiotic, which, as we will observe, in our examination of Katrin do not neatly correspond to her state.

In accord with, and reflective of, her hysteric condition, Katrin has assimilated this traumatic rupture and clings to it, paradoxically, for the subsistence and sustenance of her self to the extent of incorporating it even as a part of herself, that is, as an 'envelope of suffering' or a hysterical envelope. Perhaps, the most explicit expression of her traumatic fixation on her violation manifests itself in her acknowledging that: "I wish to hold on to my agony, it is all I have" (70). Joyce McDougall underlining the importance of physical symptoms in the psychosomatic patient argues that, the suffering body performs the function of the transitional object. Anzieu, relatedly, in his treatment of an analogous case observes: "the phantasy of the flayed skin must be kept permanently alive in the perverse masochist for him to re-acquire Skin Ego" (110). In fact, McDougall's psychopathological recognition (of the individual who experiences "the body suffering [as] a body that is alive" as a neurotic person) can effectively be extended, and applied, to Katrin. Such a strain in her (that is, resorting to the force of pain/suffering to sustain herself, and to hold her traumatized psychosomatic apparatus together) becomes poignantly visible when she professes: "To fear is to be alive. Of course, I shan't live to be old, the body cannot take the strain" (95).

In keeping with the above discussion of the hysterical ego (as an envelope of suffering), perhaps the most salient token is that, here, we witness the incorporated trauma in the form of a substantial and literal *foreign body*: the child. In his analytical reflections on the somatic manifestation and re-enactment of traumatic experiences of crisis in survival and the profound psychic conflicts it bears, Freud establishes a link between hysteria and the core experience of an attack, and dedicates his clinical studies to probing the way such a hysterical layer gets embedded in the body of the individual like a latent, and affectively laden, layer: "We must presume … that the psychical trauma – or more precisely the memory of trauma – acts like a *foreign body* which long after its entry must continue to be regarded as an agent that is still at work …" (Freud and Breuer 56; italics mine). Though they explain here that the traumatic experience is conducive to regression and the assumption of one's own bodily drives and impulses as alien, in Katrin, nevertheless, this intruded skin-ego evinces itself in a twofold manner: both an obtrusive loss on the surface of her body (her skin and her breasts) and an intrusion in the interior of her body (the child). The testimony to the fact that she recognizes the child as an interiorized traumatic layer is evident in the manner she tends to identify it already with its foreign fathers, perceiving the infant

as an aggressive violator or oppressor within her. Beckoning to the baby while holding her belly, she says: "It moves, my master ... Do feel him ... he is every bit as violent as his fathers ... He is perfectly loathsome the way he shoves. He longs to be out and about and intent on damage! **He rampages!**" (92).

One of the characteristics identified by almost all the major psychoanalysts of the field is that, "Hysterics mainly suffer from reminiscences" (Freud and Breuer 11). This propensity characterizes Katrin's fixation (to the point masochism), which coupled with her repetition compulsion bordering on obsessional neurosis, aggravates Katrin's traumatic state. Her (hallucinatory) reminiscences, constant re-counting, and the inevitable re-enactments, of both the traumatic event (which has befallen her) and the analogous, yet displaced, account of *the virgin Asian girl* scene, all attest to her aggravated state. This streak surfaces when, in order to prove her dementia, she professes to being haunted by a scene of gruesome orgy of atrocity in which some Christian troopers swoop down on an apparently virtuous Muslim girl in prayer and impale her to the ground. And, then, Katrin blindly proceeds to ask: "what satisfaction could I have from dreaming only my Turks die? Now, am I mad?" (69). Here she is obliviously ensnared in re-enacting her trauma (See Cathy Caruth 11).

Perverse and persistent (ab)use of, and resort to, language are among Katrin's other revealing idiosyncrasies which, I suggest, can be attributed to a quasi-hysteric condition among other things (see Scarry 60-61). Oral excitation and over-cathection on the oral zone are among the prevalent indications of hysteria. Annie Anzieu considers oral fixation as "one of the essential mechanisms of hysteria" consisting in the zonal confusion and erogenous diffusion of a mode of oral excitation to other parts of the body, "especially the skin surface and the sensory orifices" (68-9). Accordingly, Katrin's self-conception reveals a profound interweaving of corporeality and language. She wields language as a compensatory aegis, a protective-projective screen, or more strictly *a surrogate skin*: "I try to hide behind the language, oh, the language I do twist like bars of brass to shelter in" (68). Subsequently, she proceeds to refer to the way the experiences of traumatic pain and violence occasion both linguistic deprivation and ontological dereliction, thus, pointing to the link between language and the body which is inextricable from her sense of transgressive individuality: "The poor have neither words nor drawers" (67), insisting on continuing "In my own words [...] Words of my own"; in other words, to have a skin/body of one's own is tantamount to having a language of one's own and the reverse. This corporeal language

and/or linguistic corporeality are deemed as the space of intimacy and individuality, both of which have been trespassed in her. Elsewhere, referring to her implacable oral/verbal aggression, she reinforces this subtle relationship between language and body: "I'm so cruel, aren't I? It comes of having a vocabulary and no breasts" (70). And, then, she goes on to lament that: "I have no breasts! I have no breasts!" (69).

Nevertheless there are a number of not insignificant traits that distinguish her from simply a traumatically afflicted personality, and enhance her acute socio-political and historical consciousness. In fact, her actively disturbing the socio-political hegemony of homogeneity and unity through displaying herself as an eccentric spectacle on numerous occasions substantiates this point. These instances include Katrin's relentless efforts at publicizing and making a spectacular event of her pain and her abused body (her voluntary attendance at the science academy is a case in point (see 76-9); her aversion to home and domestication (as a repressive institutions)[40], her vehement rejection of pity and sympathy (as assimilative-defensive emotions), her implacable insistence on her existential autonomy and her own language; and eventually, her incisive ideological consciousness and discursive defiance in general, and the exploitation of her condition/status to such an effect, in particular. Katrin's uncompromising treatment of Susannah, who features more as a maternal, patronizing and domineering personality rather than sisterly, asking Katrin peremptorily to "Come home, now" (69-70) is another example. This excerpt from the scene of her public parturition elucidates her socio-politically-oriented (as much as traumatic) intentions. In the throes of labor pains, she exclaims: "Not as many as I'd hoped. Don't they like a spectacle? Not the numbers I'd predicted, but - (A spasm of pain doubles her. The Midwife goes to assist her. Katrin pushes her away.) / Nobody help me birth the child [...] (She stares into the audience.) [...] I bring you hope. / I bring you History" (102).

The foremost testimony is her denigration of home as a redemptive or restorative haven, as the origin or end of an enforced reconciliation. Katrin foregrounds the institutional nature and role

[40] Katrin foregrounds the institutional nature and role of home (and domesticity) by her denigration of home as a redemptive or restorative haven, as the origin or end of an enforced reconciliation and as a means of divesting the singularity of the individual in its sympathetic, sublational collectivity: "home is the instrument of reconciliation, the means through which all crime is rinsed in streams of sympathy and outrage doused, and blame is swallowed in upholstery, home is. the suffocator of all temper, the place where the preposterous becomes the tolerable and hell itself is stacked on shelves…" (70). Such an attitude is thoroughly conforms to Barker's trinity of political oppression of the individual: "pity, reconciliation and forgetfulness" (1998, 59).

of home (and domesticity) by decrying it as a means of divesting the singularity of the individual in its sympathetic, sublational collectivity and enclosure: "home is the instrument of reconciliation, the means through which all crime is rinsed in streams of sympathy and outrage doused … the place where the preposterous becomes the tolerable and hell itself is stacked on shelves…" (70). Such a stance thoroughly conforms to Barker's trinity of political suppression of the individual as: "pity, reconciliation and forgetfulness" (1993, 59), but can be construed as gesture of resistance and existential autonomy given his repudiation of "familiarity, domesticity and recognition" (2005, 7) as among his aesthetic principles.

Notwithstanding the valuable insight Anzieu's approach yields with respect to the play, there are problems with Anzieu's notion of the psychic envelope in relation to Barker's characters, in general, and characters in *The Europeans*, in particular that should not be overlooked. In this concern, there are two prominent points worth indicating; first, Anzieu's tendency to narrowly link the patients' defective or strained relationships to their somatic self or to other persons to what he perceives as negligent caregiving in "early infancy". Second, in Anzieu, pathological or traumatic psycho-somatic states are examined in abstraction from the overdetermined and complex social and political contexts and determinants (including issues such as race, discourse, and power relations). As such, his theory fails to account for the aforementioned subversive and transgressive endeavours undertaken by Katrin and Starhemberg.

B. Starhemberg's Other-Consciousness and the Melancholic-Narcissistic Envelope

Starhemberg's implacable hazarding of his self, apparently, in pursuit of novel possibilities for self-fabrication can be ascribed to diverse causes. His embarking on peripatetic moves and the adoption of a self-excoriating "statelessness", aside from demonstrating his existential authenticity and fluidity (see Levinas *Proper Names* 44), can also be construed as an impelled attempt to elude the stranglehold of the impersonal other (including the State, History, and even the collective) in order not to be determined by their discursive imperatives and restrictive subject positions. However, on the other hand, the latent and more overriding reason for his conduct, I would

propose, resides in Starhemberg's sense of self-suffocation issuing from his being caught between the ever-expanding and ever-contracting bounds of the self (or, put differently, his being riven between having a loose and volatile inner psychic envelope and an encrusted, impervious, and inflexible outer psychic envelope) In such a state, he is driven not solely by the impetus for existential authenticity and becoming-other, but, primarily, by an impulse to survive an inveterate traumatic state. As such, one of the reasons underlying another problematic - that Starhemberg's active process of self-fabrication up until the later parts of the play chiefly appears as a solitary task from which a "true" other seems to be excluded - comes to the fore.

Though Starhemberg comes to the other as a drastic force or a fatal gift, he is often so authoritative that his exposure is rarely a reciprocal exposure to the other (hence, not devoid of narcissistic strains at all). In fact, he seems more propelled by the impulse to have a salutary or didactic impact by goading the other into relinquishing its present habitual state and aspiring to a new imagined and unlived situation. As such, he seldom experiences genuine receptivity, susceptibility, and impassioned passivity (indispensable to ethical relation to the alterity, self-overcoming and excendance). This trait (his being faintly relational yet extremely variable/volatile), nonetheless, is not merely a blind spot in him, but what he indeed suffers from, and, thus, transpires as symptomatic, a key issue which I will delve into at length below.

This struggle evinces itself most palpably in his enterprise of roaming in the recesses of Vienna. Though Starhemberg wanders throughout the city slums at nights venturing into every nook and cranny, seeking to confront other persons and situations, the mode of nomadic life he leads is highly ambivalent. On the one hand, he selects other persons to whom he goes and the situation in which he encounters them; and on the other, even in these pre-conceived conditions there persists a faint possibility that he might face the unpredictable. This excerpt from the play, which shows him accosting a beggar in a taunting and derisory manner, illustrates his characteristic propensity: "How my lip swells from your compliments - (Second Beggar goes to attack Starhemberg, but Starhemberg is the swifter and takes the Second Beggar in a terrible embrace.) Oh, dance you terrible hater, dance, sick-with-life, **not dancing!** (He jerks him again.*)* Oh, your movements, are these the **veiled messages of love?**" (86) As such, a crucial conclusion which can be drawn from the foregoing points is that 'self', to Starhemberg, to a considerable extent is indeed *relative* (that is, volatile and variable), but it hardly appears to be *relational*.

Accordingly, it should be acknowledged that there seems to be an unbridgeable gap between him and whomever he encounters. He always retains the initiative to approach and accost an-other to himself; and hence in the play, we can specify few genuinely adventitiously encountered others. Starhemberg's being beset with this enclosing autonomy ineluctably incurs solipsism and a melancholic narcissism which express themselves in his suffering from despair, fear of death (in isomorphism, of solipsism, of self-enclosure, of deficiency or absence of a true relation or a non-predetermined intimacy with an other), and deep discontent (with both self and others). This observation is verified by indications made by Leopold, the Empress, the Midwife and by Starhemberg himself concerning his conduct and temperament. Both the midwife and the Empress discern a deep-seated turbulence and disturbance latent in Starhemberg, surging up from time to time in his emotional reactions and actions. Midwife perceptively remarks: "You have some pain, mister…", and goes on to affirm, "I think you will find death difficult" (104). Leopold asks him: "do you hate us? You do ... so that's your burden ... you are thin with hate ... Starhemberg, my maker, you are ill" (75). His poignant lament on the irremediable seal of loneliness of the dying, and his solemn demand of Katrin to help him in this regard bear witness to his pre-occupations and concerns: "Help me, or I think we'll die alone..." (96); to which she scathingly responds: "Why not? Why not die alone? How would you die? To the sound of violins, with your children clinging to your feet as if your soul could be pulled back through the ceiling? **I help you** how" (Ibid).

Furthermore, viewed from another perspective, as I will investigate this issue later in light of Levinas' arguments, the existence of this void haunting him from within can be ascribed to his lack of faith in an entity or dimension that might be irrevocably transcendent to him (see *Otherwise* xlii, 12), or, for that matter, distrust of an absolute exposure to the other. His intensely equivocal (since it can equally tenably be regarded to emanate from an ethical insight) expression of his cynicism towards any true intimacy attests to the point at stake: "NO MOMENT OF UNITY IS EVER TRUE" (83). As such, I would contend that Starhemberg suffers from what Levinas refers to as "the basic state of the self". Levinas describes the condition thus: "In its own skin. Not at rest under a form, but tight in its skin, encumbered and as it were stuffed with itself, suffocating under itself, insufficiently open, forced to detach itself from itself, to breathe more deeply, all the way, forced to dispossess itself to the point of losing itself" (*Otherwise* 110). In this regard, Levinas employs the idea of 'the One without Being' to show how the "One", namely in this instance 'me without the other', is indeed suffering, thrown back onto itself, not able to take distance from itself

in either time or space. Sensibility or vulnerability, then, mean exactly this kind of oneness without Being: "The subject will be described as denuded or stripped bare, as One or someone, expelled on the hither side of being vulnerable, that is, sensible, to which – like the One in Plato – Being cannot be attributed" (*Otherwise* 53).

The more cogent evidence, which poses the issue conspicuously in terms of *skin* and comes to accentuate this ethico-existential crisis he is beset with as traceable through *skin,* is that Starhemberg appears to be obsessed with the (naked) body of a woman who is seemingly his mother (named The Second Mother in the play) - as she emphasizes: "He is not my son. I never suffered him, nor any other infant;" and, not infrequently, he pays visits to her quite compulsively and despite his will. He reveals his intense preoccupation with her thus: "I come as rarely as I can. Often I wish to come, and refuse myself" (89). And when the Empress, in her attempts to find Starhemberg, arrives at the mother's house, and is confronted with the repulsively shabby and shadowy conditions of the place, she asks him, "Why are you here…?", he responds: "I don't know" (90). Later, the Empress foregrounds this irresistible fascination and ponderous pull she exerts on him by stating, "Madam, you have more magnetism for this man than all five hundred rooms of the Kaiserhof. I think your son is a remarkable swine" (90).

This preoccupation with seeing the "(m)other" might strike us, initially, as a masculine scopophilic solicitude with the sight of his mother's body as the focal point or primal scene for the constitution of the specular and sovereign subjectivity/self. This interpretation is not unfounded as several times throughout the play he exhibits such an inclination towards others. Towards the middle of the play, on offering some food to Susanna and flaunting his knowledge of her sexual secrecy, he asks her to strip bare in front of him by saying: "I have seen you fucked - go down and let me *look at* you - your hair - your crevices …" (77). When she intimates that she prefers them having *inter-course* rather than just baring herself in front of him, and that in a more affectionate place or manner, he adamantly shrinks from the least mutual im-plication and enfolding, and in an apathetic tone insists: "I only ask *to gaze*, there's no complication –" (78). Elsewhere, on their first vis-à-vis, when Karin confronts him with: "Why would you not look at me?" Starhemberg revealingly responds: "I only look when I am certain I shall see," to which Katrin significantly, and in a premonitory tone, replies: "You will see" (79) - though the object of this look or "seeing" might also be rightly deemed as her "existential authenticity". What is disquietingly missing in all the aforementioned instances is a void between them, or the lack of the least tangible in-between,

or concrete contact, which primarily evinces itself in the negative relational space that persists between Starhemberg and the other.

Although Starhemberg's specular drive is inerasable from his deportment, his obsession with contact with his "(m)other" (see Lacan *Ecrits* 462-3; *Seminar 17,* 85-91, 118, 129; *The Ethics of* Psychoanalysis 2, 283, 321), I would contend, transpires to be primarily a tactile one (rather than being a visual mastery) and propelled by a different impetus: a longing for development and prolongation of the self and/through the palpation of the (m)other so as to appropriate or interiorize a sustainable tranche of her body. Consequently, such a contactile reflexivity would effect the formation of a more sustainable skin-ego in him. And this incorporation, as we will see, is indeed vital to his sense of self (involving the functions of individuation, protection, containing, maintenance, and sexualization) and his relationship with the other (involving the functions of libidinal recharging, inscription, common sense, consensuality, and self-transcendence).

This primal carnal intertwinement, as we glean, has never properly taken place between Starhemberg and the (m)other figure. Second Mother's vivid and eloquent depiction of the critical scene of encounter captures its abiding presentness: "He came up *behind* me, on a hill … And he - so wanted *to touch* me - such suffering - it *marked* me - *like a disfigurement* - I could not turn but felt his awful *stare* - I felt my entire body flush with blood - the kidneys gush - the whole length of my bowel - hot rush of blood ..." (91; italics mine). The primary point that strikes us in this vignette is the intersensorial, or intercorporeal, proximity which has been unreciprocated, or laid in abeyance, between them; a lack which, in its own turn, has inflicted such an indelible corporeal gash on both of them that the traumatic moment does not cease haunting both of them. Starhemberg's forlorn intimation delivers the point: "Once I saw you naked. But only once" (88), as if implying he had not had, or internalized, enough of his (m)other or of the maternal body.

Given the arbitrary, irrational, and equally cerebral nature of erotic inclination in Barker's world (rather than being solely bound to the physical appearance or appeal of the characters), nevertheless, Barker in his scene descriptions takes pains to strip the Second Mother of the least sexual allure she might hold in order to augment the *caressing*, *con/tactile* nature of the relation between the two. The opening scene description reads: "A darkened room. An arid and dusty old woman in a chair." Furthermore, what enhances the tactile rather than visual facets of the scene is the lighting and its quality; in fact, the unobtrusive presence of light, and its haptic nature,

paradoxically sheds light on the nature of the relation between them and enhances the aspired caressing-proximal[41] condition of the house; the Empress' confounded expression in her confrontation with the conditions of this "darkened room" elucidates the point: "And why this hatred of la clarté, das licht, are you afraid to witness your own decay?" (90)

Now it would be revealing to explore the dynamics of the scene in terms of the psychopathology of the skin-ego. Intimately intermeshed with his hypothesis of attachment or clinging drive (*The Skin Ego* 12) and "the phantasy of the common skin", Anzieu elaborates the notion of "dual process of interiorization" (63) which is indispensable to the formation and proper function of skin-ego, and entails the internalization of two spatial facets of skin. First, the skin-space, or intercorporeal interface, between the mothering figure[42] (or what I have called the (m)other) and the child; and second, the mothering or caressing environment itself, both of which are lacking in Starhemberg's relation with his (m)other. According to Anzieu, the fulfilment of this "double anaclisis" (112)[43] leads to a firm and salubrious establishment of the skin-ego, which "responds to the need for a narcissistic envelope and creates, for the psychic apparatus, the assurance of a constant, certain, basic well-being" (61). In consequence of such a double inclusion (coupled with reciprocal stimulation and communication with the (m)other), the child "acquires a power of endogenous mastery that develops from a sense of confidence into a euphoric feeling of unlimited omnipotence" (80).

Now, my claim is that it is this unfulfilled con/tactile relation that is sorely visible, and underlies Starhemberg's proclivities, in the aforesaid scene and throughout the play. This vitiated, loose envelope has occasioned an existential lacuna[44] in Starhemberg, and can be held accountable for the deep sense of ontological dearth that gnaws him, and which has resulted in his ceaseless vagrancy and volatility of identity. Starhemberg conveys this intercorporeal vacuity, arising from

[41] I am utilizing the concept of "proximity" in the sense elaborated in Levinas' philosophy as a technical and central term. In Levinas's explication, proximity designates a particular mode of relationality between self and the other that involves a non-synthetic dialectical relation, self-transcendence and self-exposure, is recalcitrant to adequation of the two parties or manifestation of either, is irreducible to intentional (noetic-noematic) or subject-object dichotomies, and is informed with an obsessive rapport, a sense of urgency, utmost intimacy and affective immediacy (*Otherwise* 1-5, 81-94)

[42] Anzieu perceptively does not restrict the nurturing figure relation and role to a familial context/grid (mother) or gendered figure (female) the actual gendered mother, and instead refers to "a mothering figure" who can even be a male person irrespective of the biological gender of the individual.

[43] For further information see Elisabeth Grosz (12-4) and Freud (1914, 87-8).

[44] Such condition in a psychoanalytical context, as analysed by Anzieu, is tied with obsessive neurosis or repetition compulsion and might result in cases of hysteria and severe psychosis.

the (m)other's failure in *aesthetic reciprocity* (see Meltzer 1998), in terms of lack of vitality, slack skin (particularly her breasts) and infirm state, calling her "the antithesis of sculpture" and "the antithesis of abundance" (89) which evokes his later comparison between Katrin and Susanna (77). In brief, Starhemberg in his visits to his (m)other strenuously strives for something that is lacking there, yet he cannot restrain himself from seeking, and this corroborates the intensity of his fixation with, and urgency of, his psychosomatic need.

In keeping with the above issue of stunted skin-ego, and the already propounded affinity between tactility and orality, what brings the aforesaid existential state in Starhemberg into a sharper relief is Empress's description of him as "cold mouth" (75), not once but repeating it when countering his assertive claim to love. And we remember Katrin's reference to "mouth" as the seat of intimacy, and that its being blemished in her runs parallel with a grave affliction in her identity and relation with alterity, all of which accentuate the significance of mouth (as overdetermined organ, involving the oral, sonorous, and verbal) as the interface of the self and alterity, and as one of the focal points of aesthetic, ethical and intercorporeal relation in *The Europeans*. Similarly, the impervious rigidity that dominates others' description and perception of Starhemberg (for instance, Empress remarks: "I believe nothing you do is not calculated in utter coldness") betokens a not entirely sealed or enclosed envelope (a cold, muscular carapace-skin) he might have assumed in reaction to such a tormenting condition; as Anzieu observes: "If the outer layer is too loose, the Ego lacks consistency. The inner layer tends to form a smooth, continuous, closed envelope, while the outer layer has a mesh structure" (*The Skin Ego* 62).

In the light of the preceding argument, I would suggest the act of "asking" in Starhemberg's remark to his (m)other, "You have nothing to say but I have much to ask" (88) should be construed as haptically and orally intended rather than primarily cognitively. More strictly, by this unremitting *asking*, he aspires to a(n) (intercorporeal) re-cognition, rather than (abstract) cognition. This carnal asking can be translated into (Merleau-Pontian) terms of intercorporeal relation as "interrogation" (1968, 127-8; see also "Interrogation and Intuition" in *The Visible*): a voluptuous pursuit, and perception, of the interwovenness of the folds of flesh (of self and the other) and carnal intuition of the invisible (which is both inside and outside self and the other), thereby the attainment of an other-aware selfhood. Accordingly, Starhemberg's gaze, in the aforementioned scene, solicits envelopment, and this affective interrogation is so intense that the (Second) Mother perceives it as a sensible disfigurement on her body/skin. This is a touch which was supposed to

transfigure rather than disfigure, though.

The cogent testimony to the foregoing argument, which is also the latent key to the underlying reason of his visits, is disclosed when he professes to the (m)other: "I would have been your *child*. How I lay and wished I was *your child*. If I had been *your child* none of this would be necessary" (88). Equally revealing, when Empress breaks the news of his mother's death to Starhemberg, he responds: "Dead? *But I hadn't finished with her yet* [...] I shall have to *see her naked*, shan't **I?** I shall have to wash her and she was not clean..." (105; italics mine). Relatedly, Empress calls the Second Mother, the "Mother of Deliverance", which is irreducibly ambivalent and even ironic. It can be deemed to simultaneously designate the Second Mother as the phantasized (yet failed) deliverer of Starhemberg and also imply her as the mother of the deliverer or emancipator of Europe and European people, to wit, Starhemberg. Such a transfiguration of the self, as a restorative or redressing occurrence, is fulfilled through his encounter with Katrin, and not the mother; a considerable fact that once more attests to the fact that Barker's play defies, and repudiates, the primacy and originariness of the familial or domestic.

Notwithstanding the above discussion, however, Starhemberg's conduct, akin to Katrin's idiosyncratic manners (delineated above) which distinguish her from a merely pathological case of traumatized individual, is far from being solely confined to, or determined by, his traumatic fixation and pathologized skin-ego. In keeping with this point, my suggestion about the consideration of Starhemberg's relentless concern with an aesthetics of the self (with concomitants such as self-fabrication, self-transcendence, and self-overcoming) as indissociable from the terms of an ethics of singular relationship with the other is further corroborated, on the one hand, by Starhemberg's concern with "love" and his conception of love, and, on the other, though is his perceptive remarks to the Turk (Ottoman general) containing his understanding of the issue of freedom in relation to the self and other, coupled with that of pain and love.

What further reveals Starhemberg's attitude towards human selfhood and the subtleties of inter-personal relationships - in an incisive counterposition to Barnett's apparently Nietzschean-based argument that considers Barker's conception as involving a sovereignty of the self and solipsistic autonomy, yet tends to ignore, or exclude, the indispensable components of the Nietzschean self and his dynamics of self-cultivation, including "pathos of distance," which invariably presume a self-distanciation and self-difference inherent within the self along with the

necessity of relationality to the other (see *Beyond* 257; *Genealogy* 1:2), and "self-overcoming," which primarily applies to self rather than others (see *Beyond* 212; *Genealogy* III :27; *Zarathustra* 88-90; see also Conway 63-71) - is his acute consciousness, and understanding, of love. In fact, this "act of self-overcoming is explicitly raised by Orphuls in his laudatory comment about Starhemberg: "The good have little purchase on the memory. Who would follow the innocent? No, you follow him *who triumphs over himself,* who boils within and in whose eyes all struggle rages. Him you follow to the water's edge, and no other ... (He kisses STARHEMBERG's hand.)" (104; emphasis mine). Significantly, Starhemberg is one who far more frequently than all the other characters refers to love (both as an affectivity and a concept/word), thereby revealing his gnawing preoccupation with it (as a paradigmatic evidence to his other-consciousness in the play). When the Empress suggestively asks him: "Cold mouth. Have you a mistress?," Starhemberg responds: "I love a woman," to which Empress aptly retorts: "But your mouth is cold!" (75). Love to Starhemberg, as I will try to show, exceeds the bounds of a sheer amorous relation and is intimately associated with freedom, pain, imagination, and creativity; and all this primarily in the mode of proximity rather than identification, synthetic unity, or union.

Pain and Self-Excendance: Barker, Levinas, Nietzsche

As pervasively evident in his theoretical and dramatic works, pain is pivotal to Barker's tragic work in terms of thematics, dynamics, and aesthetics. Nevertheless, although pain constitutes one of the premises of his Art of Theatre of Catastrophe, and, as Barker strenuously emphasizes, it should be perceived as "not disorder but necessity" (*A Style* 100). Accordingly, he recognizes pain as "spiritually necessary" to the "tragic sensibility", which - considering its being associated with loss, contradiction, complexity, ethical ambiguity, and transgression - fosters "a melancholy beauty", identified as the "whole justification for his theatre" (100). More specifically, Barker significantly establishes a firm, yet fraught, relationship between love, pain, and beauty (though death is also intimately bound up with these three), and moulds them into a tension-laden manifold. This statement confirms the point at issue where Barker defines his Theatre of Catastrophe as "a theatre [...] which insists on complexity and pain, and the beauty that can only be created from the spectacle of pain. In Catastrophe [...] lies the possibility of reconstruction" (*Arguments* 53). Thus, the three aforementioned strands, in their own turn, constitute a recurrent triadic tangle,

accentuating the inextricableness of four pivotal concerns at issue in Barker's work: the ontological, the aesthetic, the ethical, and the epistemological. A fleeting survey of Barker's plays suffices to confront us with a host of instances which vividly demonstrate the foregoing points. In *The Europeans,* Orphuls asserts: "I speak as your advisor in whose pain you may see real beauty" (Barker 108). In *Rome*, Abraham vocalizes this conviction: "To love is to inflict impossible pain. On self, and others" (Barker 205). In *Gertrude - The Cry* the servant Cascan describes Gertrude in these terms: "Her life is such a seeking and so beautiful is her pain" (64). In *Hard Heart*, Sleen's remark clinches the connection: "Love…which could not bear to show itself…hides in pain…and welcomes every evidence of malignity" (77).

It is also worth underscoring that in Baker, pain is primarily individual and individuating (as one of the principal components of an aesthetics of self-cultivation). Baker adamantly maintains that, in a culture dominated by the neo-liberal conceptions of personal identity as well as "relentless utilitarianism" (90), insistent discursive demands of "accessibility" (85-91), "relevance" (32, 139, 152), "transparency" (163-4), "functionality" (*Arguments* 122, 132-3; *Death* 4), "false collectivity" (*Arguments* 17), commodification of language, meaning, and art (*Death* 14, 20, 38), a residual, surreptitious subsistence of Enlightenment meta-narratives (74, 92-7, 109, 146) of progress, rationality, and totalizing knowledge, and above all, a relentless, yet insidious attempt at "the annihilation of the individual pain in collective orthodoxy" (59), it is "pain that the audience needs to experience" (45). And, thus, tragedy "restores pain to the individual" (19).

Yet, equally decisive, pain entails an ethical dynamics and the undertaking of an ethical crisis/process by the audience as well as characters. This ethical relation with respect to pain is twofold: between the individual (both of the audience and the character in the play) and the collective, the discursive, or the socio-symbolic on the one hand; and between the audience (individually) and characters on the stage, or between the characters on the stage, on the other. As Barker asserts, the individual member of the audience "comes with a single desire — to witness unlived life, which the ideological and the mechanical conspire to conceal. (69). Approached and assumed individually, and divested of the props of collective or communal solidarity and security, the individual is invoked to overcome his initial ideological, or habitual, reaction to pain and its premeditated meaning, and through his own perceptual-cognitive capacities to encounter spectacle of pain as a unique event to which the individual exposes himself, responds, and bears witness. Consequently, in the darkness of the Theatre of Catastrophe which separates the audience from

itself and obliges him "to confront the pain on the stage in isolation" (147), morality "is created in art, by exposure to pain and the illegitimate thought" (47). As such, I would argue, pain is one of the chief "affects" (due to its unique dynamics and nature) that bridges the gap between the aesthetics and ethics in Baker.

Concerning the other facet, the ontological (and existential), pain is intimately linked with the issues of necessity and meaning of pain, with the questions of negativity and evil, and with anxiety (as an existential stimmung). Accordingly, pain is firmly postulated as an indissociable feature of existence, but also as one of the conditions of authenticity in tragic sensibility. As Barker asserts: "It is impossible – now, at this point in the long journey of human culture – to avoid the sense that pain is necessity, [...] that it is integral to the human character both in its inflicting and its suffering. This terrible sense tragedy alone has articulated, and will continue to articulate, and in so doing, make *beautiful* ..." (*Death* 105).

Given the patent ontological aspects of tragedy (as elaborated and drastically re-defined by Barker) as an art form which seeks and presents "the unlived life", challenges the reality of the real, in which "impossibility is drawn into proximity", and has pain as an indispensable premise of it - to preclude its being assimilated as a means to an end (in the grids of theology or ideology), Barker takes pains to divest pain of all socio-political, ideological and moral associations, investments, and imperatives (including use value, exchange value, catharsis, and pleasure principle) traditionally attached to it, to the extent of refuting even the aesthetic paradigms that deploy pain for the purpose of evoking humanist sensibilities or moral teaching and didacticism. As such, in his plays pain proves to be a *la part maudite* (a residue or vestige inassimilable to dialectical-teleological schemes/systems); an affectivity irreducibly imbued with ambiguity, heterogeneity, contradiction, and subversive singularity: "Tragedy exists simply because the pain of others, and subsequently our own, is a necessity to witness – not to make sense of, not for a utility value, but as something for itself [...] it is Pain For Pain's Sake" (*Arguments* 112). Much later he emphatically reiterates the same principle: "*The art of theatre* takes pain as its subject, not to exploit it for political ends, as a lesson in moral obligations but as *an end in itself* ..." (*Death* 33). Such an attitude towards pain pervades Barker's work as pain frequently transpires as an eventful and vital force in the aesthetic/ethical process of becoming self/other. *Blok/Eko* is indeed a paradigmatic case in point; a play in which pain (and two antithetical approaches to it,

respectively that of art (poetry) and that of medicine) constitutes the crux of the play[17]. As regards the epistemological and ethical dimensions of pain, I will dwell on them at length below.

As indicated above, I would discuss that 'pain' in *The Europeans* features as a twofold phenomenon, and entails two critical moments which, accordingly, yield two concomitant aftermaths: individuation and super-individuation. With regard to the former notion, I will be drawing on both Nietzsche and Levinas; and concerning the latter, I will rely on Levinas' proposed ideas. Both Nietzsche and Levinas regard pain and/or suffering as a crucial and constitutive element in morality, moral value, and moral self (Boothroyd 150). Although Nietzsche and Levinas, as I will briefly discuss later, differ in determining respects, they both repudiate the possibility of abolition of suffering strongly even as they insist on the necessity of surpassing it. But to Nietzsche and Levinas what lies beyond pain/suffering radically differs; to the former, it signifies transcending the pain for the affirmation of life in will-to-power, self-cultivation, and amor fati; and to the latter, it designates moving, or gesturing, towards the infinite responsibility/responsivity towards the Other (Ibid, 151).

To begin with Nietzsche, he not only decries the attachment of meaning and value to suffering and imputes such a proclivity to the weak, but also diagnoses this as a source of moral indignation to the modern ethos (*Genealogy* 48). Nietzsche, nevertheless, does not fail to attest that extreme pain results in the condensation of the self-perception and bears self-mastery and self-insight, the gestation of something new as well as the affirmation of life: "from such abysses, from such severe sickness, also from the sickness of severe suspicion, one returns newborn, *having shed one's skin* ... with a second dangerous innocence in joy, more childlike and yet a hundred times subtler than one has ever been before" (*Gay Science* 37, emphasis added; see also Stauffer 156). Accordingly, due to the provocative, resuscitating effects that pain (or suffering) induces, he does not hesitate to exhort instigating pain in others: "To see somebody suffer is nice, to make somebody suffer even nicer – that is a hard proposition, but an ancient, powerful human-all-too-human proposition…. No cruelty, no feast: that is what the oldest and the longest period in human history teaches us" (*Genealogy of Morality* 46).

Nietzsche distinguishes between 'aristocratic' and 'ascetic' attitudes towards pain. Aristocratic response to pain is characterized by introjection; meaning that the aristocratic sensibility tends to carry pain inside and appropriate it as a stimulating force towards growth, self-

cultivation, and knowledge. Ascetic response or sensibility to pain involves, contrarily, the projection of the pain. Such projective proclivity, on the part of the ascetic, manifests itself in a hysteric and histrionic behaviour in order to achieve a sense of identification with his fellow sufferers and to resort to it as a manipulative solicitation for others' pity (156). In this regard, the gravest peril to which Nietzsche alerts us is the underlying menace of 'over-identification' with the suffering which contains deleterious effects on the self. Nietzsche's discerning of the transformative role of pain in rendering the transcendent into immanent is corroborated/verified by Alphonso Lingis' cogent explanation of the existential outcome of the experience of "being in pain" (note the tacit spatial metaphor) in a Nietzschean note/key: "Pain is immanence; it is conscious, nothing but consciousness, a consciousness backed up to itself, mired in itself. To suffer pain is, for consciousness, to be unable to flee or retreat from itself, unable to project itself outside upon some outlying object or event (58). Nonetheless, not ignoring the individualizing and immanentizing impacts of pain perceptible in Katrin and Orphuls, yet putting them aside for the moment, we will witness how Katrin's and Starhemberg's intermediary states and their correspondent proximal approach to pain not only do not fit snugly with Nietzsche's antithetical categorization, but prove to problematize it.

To pursue this established thread in the play, what elevates Katrin above the level of a sheer traumatized and passively aggressive individual, and makes her a far more complex and dynamic character (who steers her experience of pain to her re-individuation) consists in the fact that, on the one hand, she does not adopt a dismissive and evasive attitude towards her pain, and on the other hand, her understanding and application of her pain is not restricted to the aforementioned traumatic level. Such a trait evinces itself from the outset of the play. Though conceding that the hysteric-traumatic indications are hardly erasable from her, she refuses to relegate her pain to a public or collective space so as to share it, or to mitigate its intensity, by projecting it. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that she endeavours to transmit, not 'her own pain', but 'such a pain' to others. As such, she wills herself as well as others to undergo its transformative impacts more profoundly until a re-schematized and re-substantiated self fleshes forth.

Katrin directs her pain both inward and outward and, as such, in her treatment of pain undermines, or exceeds, Nietzsche's sharp distinction between the two contrasting reactions to pain, meaning the ascetic and aristocratic categorization predicated on the direction towards which the individual propels his/her pain. On the one hand, she does not cease her efforts at publicizing

and making a spectacular event of her pain and abused body (her voluntary attendance at the science academy and her public parturition are emblematic cases in point); on the other hand, and quite contrarily, she unrelentingly seeks to interiorize and introject her pain so as to keep her singular individuality and to ward off appropriation of her pain. In the course of the play, she constantly ventures into the public realm and infringes the propriety and seemingly smooth order of discourse by her disruptively abject gestures and remarks. In fact, she conceives of such splitting pangs as salubrious and vivifying, since, to her, they function as vital urges to re-constitution or re-fabrication of the self: "HOW DID I PERISH, I WAS MADE" (95).

Starhemberg, in the same vein, does not subscribe to Nietzsche's belief that pain is entirely meaningless and useless. He draws a distinction between inspiring and fecund pain on the one hand, and futile and absurd pain, on the other: "There's pain for something and pain for nothing, so birth's tolerable and torture's sheer disintegration, surely?" (101) He also underscores the de/re-constructive potentialities of pain in that it opens up fissures within the speciously solid and monolithic body of the self, and as such, generates new spaces for its re-configuration and re-fabrication of the self: "I say pain's divisible" (Ibid). Accordingly, he vehemently holds that pain must be accommodated as one of the premises of art since through embracing such pain, new layers of self and self-affectivity as heteronomy will unfold: "I need an art which will recall pain. I need an art that will plummet through the floor of consciousness and free the unborn self. I need an art that will shatter the mirror in which we pose. The art that will be will be all mirrors. I want to make a new man and new woman but only from the pieces of the old" (100).

Starhemberg discerns pain, and its personal appropriation, as indispensable to attaining and maintaining an authentic relation with one's own self. Early in the play he asks the Empress not to consign Katrin to an institutionalized corner and to let her bear her pain, because he regards it vital to her selfhood and her personal being: "They pretend to pity her, but they steal her pain. Don't chain her in some madhouse" (103). And in the meantime, he adumbrates a hazard involved in this undertaking which is not recognized by either of the two philosophers, that is, the annexation of the personal pain by the state, history, and the public. At the turbulent scene where Katrin spurns all interventions - done apparently out of humanitarian gestures and impulses - Starhemberg similarly restrains others from intruding by insisting: "Her pain she needs. Her suffering she requires" (103). Thus, it is evident that Starhemberg regards pain as an individuating force in undergoing and undertaking which the individual reaches condensation and elucidation. This

accounts for his describing Katrin, while in the throes of birth pangs, as "lucid" (Ibid); I would propose that here, by "lucid", he means that she is lucid to herself (or more strictly, she has attained self-lucidity), that (her pain-ridden ... has yielded her) she has reached or achieved a moment of profound intellectual and psychosomatic lucidity and hence, an intense self-knowledge to which Nietzsche referred above.

From the foregoing discussion the third constituent of this triad of pain (of birth) emerges: beauty. Such an agonizing moment of birth is inextricably intertwined with the beautiful efflorescence and dehiscence of new dimensions and folds of the self. The self entangled in the piercing cries of self-disunification and irradiating torsions of self-struggle is a thing of beauty. Starhemberg conversing with the midwife indicates: "Birth's a thing of beauty, surely?" (101). Orphuls, confirming Starhemberg's statement and condensing different concomitants of pain, including self-exposure and beauty, into the space of his intimation asserts: "I speak as your adviser in whose pain you may see beauty, I praise my beauty and you must praise yours! I end here, in a proper and terrible exhaustion. I have laid myself before you, which is the duty of a Priest" (108). Later in the play Orphuls adverts to a threefold doctrine of an aesth/ethic which comes to reverberate and encapsulate Starhemberg's articles of faith: "The Triple Order of the Groaning God" as "Beauty, Cruelty and Knowledge" (Ibid).

To Levinas pain/suffering and its perception in the Other is an undergoing not a 'conatus essendi', it (the person in pain) exists as exposure, as pure sensation, not a struggle for living. Accordingly, in responding sensorially and ethically to the suffering of the Other, 'self' relinquishes the primacy of his preoccupation with self-preservation: "In the conatus essendi, which is the effort to exist, existence is the supreme law. However, with the appearance of the face on the inter-personal level, the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill' emerges as a limitation of the conatus essendi. It is not a rational limit. Consequently, interpreting it necessitates thinking it in ethical terms. It must be thought outside the idea of force". (PM 175).

As indicated above, Levinas concurs with Nietzsche in attesting to sheer pain or suffering as devoid of meaning or utility in itself; as Levinas states: "pure suffering is intrinsically meaningless and condemned to itself without exit" ("Useless Suffering" 158-65). Levinas, however, radically diverges from Nietzsche in that he does not hold that pain/suffering is confined to such a solipsistic space or level. Boothroyd elucidates the point at issue: "The Levinasian notion of the Other's

absolute otherness – the coincidence of Good beyond being and the other person who suffers – remains undiscovered by Nietzsche" (160).

Levinas departs from Nietzsche when he argues that in relation between the self and suffering/pain of the Other, the individual is caught up in a centrifugal and incremental structure of response and responsibility towards the Other, a vortex in which always "the I is what involves one movement more" in the iterative involvement and exchange of exposure, sorrow, and suffering. Thus, the individual is prompted out of the conatus essendi and exigencies of the self, and, in consequence, exceeds the bounds of solipsism. Indeed, the pivotal facet of Levinas' ethico-philosophical account of what occurs to the substantive subject as a *being-in-a-skin* emerges when he suffers, or is in ordeal or pain: "The individuation, or super-individuation, of the ego consists in being itself, in its skin", but he proceeds to note that, this is "without sharing the conatus essendi of all beings which are beings in themselves" (*Otherwise* 118). What is highly decisive here is the essentiality of presupposing, though not prioritizing, the self (individuation) in relation with the Other and this bears notable affinity to Merleau-Ponty's account of carnal intimacy and sheds ample light on the final part of the later part of the play in conjunction with the last scene which culminates in the inter-corporeal intimacy (in the medium of haptic gaze and skin de/en-velopment) between Katrin and Starhemberg.

In such a vertiginous communication with alterity, a third dimension, a new inter-personal space transcendent to, and in excess of, both of them is created; in Levinas' words: "a beyond takes shape in the inter-human … the suffering of suffering, the suffering for the useless suffering of the other person, the just suffering in me for the unjustifiable suffering of the Other, opens upon suffering the ethical perspective of the inter-human". And further on, he adds: "Properly speaking, the inter-human lies in the non-indifference of one to another, in a responsibility of one for another" ("Useless Suffering" 158-65). Levinas designates the movement towards, and the process of formation of, this third dimension as "super-individuation", which is the supreme rejection of *egological interiority*. More determining is that the subject-in-pain, or the suffering subject, is a 'less-than-wholly-individualized' subjectivity. In Boothroyd's elaboration on the phrase: "a subject that is either halfway to coming into being or halfway to becoming unified – depending on the direction one supposes" (154). Thus, the above notion implies a certain degree of fluidity, self-difference, indeterminacy, and even impropriety of the self; idiosyncrasies which, on the one hand, are invariably expressive of already-delineated psychosomatic state of Katrin and partially

Starhemberg's (particularly concerning their being in pain) and on the other hand, render the self even more amenable to entering that proximal state.

C. The Efflorescence of the Third Skin

In the analysis of the later part of the play, I would like to advance the argument that in the process of *excendance*[45] (or super-individuation) (either of them being in a state of extreme suffering/pain), this inter-human dimension that emerges between the self and the other, is an essentially 'inter-corporeal' space in which not only both parties transcend their own sensible and ethical limits; more importantly, this dimension is, in fact, the outcome of the efflorescence of 'a third skin' out of and between both of them. This *third skin*, I would propose, is the corporeal co-articulation of the self and the other. In other words, Katrin and Starhemberg, through their suffering, coalesced with suffering one another's suffering, outgrow themselves; Starhemberg partially and provisionally reaches out of his habituated self (as a narcissistic-hysteric envelope) and Katrin forgoes her traumatized self (as an autistic-hysteric envelope or her envelope of suffering). As such, they create and enter *a shared skin*, a third envelope in which the self unfolds itself and enfolds other-than-the-self. This third skin or envelope is an envelope of proximity in the folds of which they are intertwined and through which an in-between and an evental moment of self-birth to other-than-the-self take place[46].

[45] For an extended explication of the term see Levinas' *On Escape* 54-6.

[46] Notably, this inter-corporeal, entre-deux space/dimension, or third skin, is fraught with ambiguity and empirical pregnancy, and is embedded, both in language and ethical relation with the other; and this ambiguity is vital for the preclusion of identification, unity and manifestation. Thus, I would propose and argue that, this subtle skin of sensibility and proximity is in nature and structure very akin to the notion of the '*fold of the flesh'* as advanced by Merleau-Ponty (see *Visible* 135, 137, 139), with the crucial difference that the former (third skin) is concocted/fabricated in the throes of an con/tactile aesth/ethics and requires undergoing trans-substantiation and partly re-schematization of the lived body. In Levinas, too, the subtlety of this proximal space is expressed in terms of "tenderness of skin". Tenderness, here, does not refer to the texture of the skin, but rather to its simultaneous invitation and susceptibility, to its reversibility as toucher and touched. Levinas's references to the skin's tender surface confound the distinctions between phenomenal and non-phenomenal. The tenderness of skin belongs to the order of chiasmatic perception (as articulated by the later Merleau-Ponty). Skin reflects an oscillation between visibility and invisibility, because skin indicates the equivocation of the face and also because its tenderness betokens "the very gap [decalage] between the approach and approached" (*Otherwise* 90). Accordingly, this 'tenderness of skin' is characterized as an immanent, ethically significant, enter-deux space: "a disparity, a non-intentionality, a non-teleology," and "I can enjoy and suffer ... because contact with skin is still proximity of a face" (*OB* 90). Hence, as it

What is revealing in both scenes of co-birth and carnal intimacy between Katrin and Starhemberg is that Barker delineates this moment - in which they (momentarily) are denuded of their present envelopes and transcend their former skin egos - as both sitting against each other naked; in other words, this figural moment of aesth/ethic denudation and trans-substantiation has been transposed into a literal sense or scene of nakedness. There we read: "A room in Vienna, shuttered. The bell ceases. Into the obscurity, Starhemberg walks slowly. He removes his clothing, item by item. He goes to a chair, and sits. KATRIN is discovered, already naked, in a chair distantly opposite his own. They gaze, unfalteringly." (109-110).

The moment is starkly marked by affectivity and somaesthetic sensibility: with consuming pain and intense 'mutual exposure' between the two in which they are intertwined. What should be noted is that, the term *exposure* and its correlate, *exposition*, are opaque, highly charged and multi-directional here. Exposition, here, does not mean an extraction or unveiling of intimacy; it does not signify the act of disclosure of an essence or self-exhibition. Because, then, *exposition of the self* would be crudely interpreted in terms of translation of a core self into a carnal medium (and as such, a spectacular act of striptease would be the apotheosis of self-revelation), and not merely an existentio-ethical exposure of the self to what is heteronomous and informed by trace and differánce. I would suggest that here, 'exposition', true to its aesthetic and ethical implications, and above all, in light of the pivotal role of *skin* in the play, is an 'ex-peausition'. It is an intermediary, interstitial and inter-facial act; and as such, its position is profoundly akin to that of skin; hence the moments of experience of pain are invariably coeval with exposure of skin, extension of skin and exchange of skin.

Now Levinas can help us to explain the nature of skin (as sensibility and affectivity) and dynamics of this act of "giving and exchanging skin" (as an act of self-transcendence, intercorporeal proximity between inter-ipseities, and self-cultivation). To recall discussions from the foregoing parts, if we are to distil Freud and Anzieu's theory of the skin ego we can state that we are both psychically and physically 'beings-in-skin'. This conception of the individual leads us to and constitutes the link with Levinas's depiction of an ethical subjectivity as a *being-in-a-skin*, or as he elsewhere articulates: "I am entrails in a skin" (*Totality* 77). Correspondingly, Levinas

is evident throughout the article, I have pursued an approximately similar logic (logic of fold and con/tactile aesth/ethics) though via two apparently different yet convergent paths.

determines the "self" as intrinsically interwoven with skin (corporeality), pain, and alterity; a characterization which is entirely congruent with Barker's depiction of self in *The Europeans*. Levinas defines the very "living human corporeality" in terms of "a possibility of pain, a sensibility which of itself is the susceptibility to being hurt". Worthy of attention is the manner Levinas's definition of the self is akin to "the self" as it is depicted in *The Europeans*. The self, in Levinas' delineation, is "a self despite itself, in incarnation, where it is the very possibility of suffering, suffering and trauma" (*Otherwise* 50). He characterizes the self as "obsessed by the other with the passivity of a trauma, but one that prevents its own representation, a deafening trauma, cutting the thread of consciousness which should have welcomed it" (111); and proceeds to couch it specifically in terms of *skin*: "a self uncovered, exposed and suffering in its skin. In its skin it is stuck in its skin, not having its skin to itself, a vulnerability" (51). Though, in this trauma, he maintains: "the Good re-absorbs, or redeems, the violence of non-freedom" (123).

Even more suggestively, and germane to *The Europeans*, Levinas refers to the act of "giving skin" and defines the subject as an individual "that is hungry and eats, entrails in a skin, and thus capable of giving the bread out of his mouth, or *giving his skin*" (*Totality* 77). In *Otherwise Than Being,* Levinas, taking his point of departure from his analysis of "the caress" in *Time and the Other* coalesced with an affirmative adaptation from Merleau-Ponty's last writings (see Perpich 116-9), proceeds to posit "skin" as a paradigmatic site which illustrates the ambiguity of the "face". Significantly Levinas at different junctures juxtaposes the face with skin and tends to deploy them interchangeably to the point of identification. Referring to skin in terms of *face,* he argues: "Signifyingness is the immediacy of a skin and a face, a skin which is always a modification of a face, a face that is weighted down with a skin" (*OB* 85). As such, skin transpires as "the divergence between the visible and invisible" (Ibid 89). Further, as is firmly established in *Totality and Infinity*, the *face* is considered to be the paradigmatic emblem and locus of the ethical encounter/event as well as the manifestation of infinitude and transcendence; however, as we well know from Levinas' elaboration, *face* is inherently *haptic* rather than optic; the face "is a demand, not a question. The face is a hand in search of recompense, an open hand" (*The Provocation of Levinas* 169).

This skin should not be construed as 'the physical skin', or as confined to the representational and objectified body which is subjected to scrutiny in natural sciences (see Boothroyd 132). It designates a non-conceptualizable sensibility, non-thematizable actuality, "a

modality of subjectivity" (*OB* 26). What renders skin in Levinas' account of it highly relevant and of substantial contribution to my analysis of Katrin and her relationship with Starhemberg is that skin features as a 'not-yet-decided' (hence fluid and malleable: with intense aesthetic potentiality), passive, and vulnerable entity (all rendering it highly susceptible to ethics). As Boothroyd, elucidating Levinas's statement that "[a]s passivity, in the paining of the pain felt, [skin as] sensibility is a vulnerability" (*OB* 55) – argues: "exposure to the other [through skin] is at one and the same time surface of all possible contact and the exposedness to injury, wounding and violence- and physical pain itself" (156).

Thus, in the climactic scene, stark nakedness reveals the excess of sensibility, inter-corporeal exposure, and vulnerability; and the act of denudation, on both Katrin's and Starhemberg's part, features as an act of self-giving through which each self turns itself into a possibility of utmost solicitation, inter-affective responsivity, and inter-relational becoming. As such, the *haptic gaze* proves to be the totality of the body (or exposed skin) through which the totality of sensible-spiritual capacities are offered for reciprocal enfoldment, intercorporeal proximity in the haptic gaze. To more strictly elaborate on the *haptic gaze* involved in the scene, which offers the possibility of confluence without fusion, the haptic/tactile aspect of incarnate gaze is foregrounded by Merleau-Ponty who argues for the possibility of palpating others with the look "because the gaze itself envelops them, clothes them with its own flesh" (*Basic Writings,* 249). This point is also confirmed by Roland Barthes when he observes: "by gaze I touch, I seize, I am seized" (*Responsibility of Forms* 238). This is the way in that moment of "unfaltering gaze" between them, Starhemberg "gives skin" to Katrin and she to him, thereby overcoming their traumatized skin-egos. This extreme mode of communication as "proximity", I would suggest, explains the sheer absence of language or utter speechlessness by both characters, since according to Levinas this "relationship of proximity ... is the original language, a language without words or propositions, pure communication" (*Collected* 119).

Strikingly apposite is that Jean-Luc Nancy too, in his philosophical reflections on the body, construes 'expeausition' as skin-show (33). This act, in accord with the fundamental ambiguity of skin/flesh and con/tactile aesthetics involved in the play, is an act of both exposition/exposure and concealment/withdrawal. Such a move requires that one treat oneself as a constantly entre-deux (in-between two or inter-mediary) phenomenon (see *Visible* 147-8; 194-5); in other terms, it defies metaphysics of presence and self-identity, and requires self-distanciation or self-parting. Nancy's

cogent discussion can be illuminating in this regard: "Exposition … means that expression itself is an intimacy and a withdrawal. The a-part-self is not translated or incarnated into exposition, it is what it is there: this vertiginous withdrawal *of* the self *from* the self that is needed to open the infinity of that withdrawal *all the way up to* self" (33-4). Furthermore, he accordingly defines body as a mobile sensible in a perpetual state of self-transcendence, as this "departure of self to self. The body is self in departure, insofar as it parts - displaces itself right here from the here" (Ibid). As such, the *skin* transpires as an essentially intermediary, incomplete and dehiscent space which is characterized by the opening of sense, the passage of sensibility, and unfolding of carnality.

And it is owing to this, I maintain, that Katrin exposes herself and calls this act of exposition an act of love (as self-exposure and self-transcendence, in a Levinasian sense). She says: "I show myself to you. I show myself, and it is an act of love. Stay in your place! … You were not moving, no ... (Pause) I am in such a torment it would be an act of pity to approach me, pure pity, but you will not, will you?" (109). Hence, in keeping with Katrin's severely infringed skin, the intimate communication between them takes place in the subtlest and least literally haptic mode of contact: (the carnal light of) the gaze. Their con/tactile moment of love takes place in the textures of light: "Yes, may I call you my love, whether or not you love me I must call you my love, **don't get up!**" (Ibid).

In accord with the foregoing, seemingly conflictual, features of the scene, the agony and ardour of the moment have been couched in an oxymoronic language: the language of love in lacerating terms: "I am in the most beautiful Hell. Praise me a little, mutter me a bit, describe, describe for Christ in Heaven's sake, I could gnaw your knees to blood, and you mine, I know you could" (109). Pain, here, figures as an involuted fold: both outward and inward, both as gathering and dissipating, both including and excluding, inscribed with self and the other. This pain of co-birth is at once rending and redeeming, at once dis-assembling and re-assembling. The aforesaid idiosyncrasies render this peculiar mode of pain as intensely akin to the features of folds of the flesh (delineated by Merleau-Ponty in terms of reflexivity and divergence (see *Visible* 130-156)) integral to the moment of intercorporeal proximity (an entre-deux moment of simultaneous dehiscence and connaissance). By the same token, in the scene of her public birth, when Starhemberg asseverates that Katrin is vitally in need of her pain/suffering, predicated on the arguments above, we can infer that he intends, she acutely needs to slough off her former skin to assume an-other skin for the however tenuous formation and integration of the self whilst warding

off the (ideological or moral-collective) positivation of her pain by still retaining a considerable degree of negativity both towards herself (both at the moment of parturition and, later, by ejecting and banishing her own child from herself) and the socio-symbolic discourse.

By the same token, at the scene of her public birth, when Starhemberg asseverates that Katrin is vitally in need of her pain/suffering, predicated on the arguments above, we can infer that he intends that she acutely needs to partially rend and simultaneously mend her former skin (ego) to be able to assume an-other skin (ego) for the however tenuous formation and integration of the self. Thus treated, pain presents itself as an affective, expressive space in which self-in-suffering in its torturous movements comes to unfold itself, becomes exposed to other folds and is disposed to enfold some layers and traces of the other: pain as the space of difference.[47]

Furthermore, what should be noted is that, this radical exposure and ostensible passivity towards the other (manifest in Katrin's and Starhemberg's sitting still facing each other) should not be taken at face value, to wit, passivity as opposed to activity. Contrarily, given the evident ramifications of this exposure and passivity in the play, I suggest, we should conceive of this passivity in a Levinasian sense: passivity as the manifestation of utmost passion and potentiality. In this regard, 'radical passivity', as T. C. Wall acutely comments: "conceals or harbors in itself, or communicates with, a potentia; it is always outside itself and is its own other. Passive with regard to itself, the essential passivity of the subject must undergo itself, suffer itself, feel itself as other. In this sense, passivity is purely passionate" (Wall 1).

The releasing, restorative, and regenerative effect of the encounter immediately exhibits itself in Katrin's assertion that: "I'm better now, much better ..." (109) Then she proceeds to express her bewilderment at the amatory potentialities of the look, which expectedly arises from the traditional and historical association of sense of sight with scopic/specular economy, specularization, fetishism and ocularcentrism, which in their own turn, are inveterately bound up with phallocentrism, male visual mastery and visual rape (see Jay 493-5, 526-540). She professes: "It's

[47] Heidegger's description of pain is illuminating in this regard:
But what is pain? Pain rends. It is the rift. But it does not tear apart into dispersive fragments. Pain indeed tears asunder, yet so that at the same time it draws everything to itself ... Its rending, as a separating that gathers, is at the same time that drawing which like the pen-drawing of a plan or sketch draws and joins together what is held apart in separation. Pain is the joining agent in the rending that divides and gathers. Pain is the joining of the rift ... pain joins the rift of the difference. Pain is the dif-ference itself (201-2).

odd, but though I have done all that suggested itself to me, I never looked at any man but you, I think. Looked, I mean. I never knew to look was love" (109).

What renders both persons so amenable to the creation of this aesth/ethic moment is that neither of them is an idealist and aspires to identification, synthetic unity, reconciliation, and hence the dissolution of the self or subsumption of the other. We already witnessed how vehemently she rebuffed any pretentious gesture of pity, empathy or sympathy and also repudiated collectivity, historicization and institutionalization at the cost of dis-individuation in her scathing remarks on her sister and home as an instrument of reconciliation. With regard to Starhemberg's deep distrust of such an appropriative and exploitative approach, there are two illuminating passages; one is utttered by Katrin and substantiates his aversion towards such a sublational synthesis: "I know because you are not kind, thank God, you spare us kindness, and your body is quite grey, it is so far from perfect, you spare us perfection also!" The other articulation of disbelief in the ideal unity of self and the other is made by Starhemberg himself: "No moment of unity is ever true" (83).

Thus, notwithstanding the apparent absence of any visible act of "touching" between them, they "caress," rather than touch, (see Levinas 1999: 258; 1987: 89) one another through their con/tactile *gazes* and this is the manifestation of the utmost love; the fulfillment of their harrowing, yet implacable, "Struggles to Love", as reflected in the subtitle of the play. Barker himself alludes to the occurrence of this event as one of the rarest moments in his drama: "The word love is not uncommon in my work, but I only edged towards a meaning for it in *The Europeans*". Significantly, he proceeds to affirm that this love in *The Europeans* "is in many ways not mediated through the body, as desire is" (Barker in Brown 60-1). These observations strongly corroborate the proposed analysis of the nature and dynamics of the relationship between the two characters expounded in terms of caress and the third skin above. Accordingly, Barker also describes Starhemberg's love for Katrin as "a love for her completion, her pursuit, which he perceives and perhaps judges more finely than she does herself" (Ibid).

CHAPTER THREE

THE ACOUSMATIC VOICE AS THE CHIASMATIC FLESH: AN ANALYSIS OF HOWARD BARKER'S *GERTRUDE-THE CRY*

THE ACOUSMATIC VOICE AS THE CHIASMATIC FLESH: AN ANALYSIS OF HOWARD BARKER'S *GERTRUDE-THE CRY*

> Sound…is what is not at first intended. It is not first "intentioned": on the contrary, sound is what places its subject, which has not preceded it with an intention, in tension, or under tension. (Nancy 2007, 20)

Introduction

Gertrude-the Cry[48] written in 2002 and, significantly, directed the same year by Howard Barker himself, starkly marks a critical juncture not only in Barker's dramatic career but in his personal life as well (see Barker 2007, 66-7). Barker has drawn attention to the importance of the work of the actress Victoria Wicks, who played the role of Gertrude, and indeed to the significance of his relationship with Wicks for his creation of the play. Accordingly, an uncanny and reciprocally consequential convergence emerges from the juxtaposition of Barker's own account in *A Style and Its Origins* and the occurrences in *Gertrude*. The repercussive quests in the play undertaken by Gertrude and Claudius in pursuit of the Impossibles, culminating in the sacrificial death of Claudius and the ostensible terminus of their relationship, come to converge with, and even arguably occasion, the cessation of a longstanding liaison between Barker and his former lover—Marcia Pointon (68-9). Even more bizarrely, the performance is conducive to the parting of the actress playing Gertrude, Victoria Wicks, from her husband; an actress who is acclaimed by Barker as the source of imaginative inspiration for the creation of the play's main female character (56, 66). Thus, *Gertrude* emblematizes the case where art, among its other disruptive idiosyncrasies, transpires as an ontological intervention (see Deleuze 2004, 260-2); an event through which the

[48] Henceforth referred to as *Gertrude*.

ontological borders between the allegedly real and empirical world (more lucidly, Barker, Wicks and Pointon's life and relationships among them as individual persons and irrespective of their artistic roles) and the aesthetic or fictional world (Barker, Wicks and Pointon as the author, artist/actress and the lover respectively, on the one hand, and Gertrude and Claudius as the characters of the play, on the other hand) are blurred and the aesthetic realm turns into a hauntology (see Derrida 2006, 10) infringing on the current ontology(of the socio-symbolic realm as lived by all the aforementioned individuals). Barker, furthering his account of the foregoing occurrences, proceeds to expound how he came to "imagine" his character (Gertrude) through Wicks and how Wicks (the person) "re-imagined" herself through Gertrude (the character) (Barker 2007, 39, 49, 56); and eventually how the whole aesthetic dynamic at stake affected Barker (the author) ethically and existentially: "In auditioning Victoria Wicks, Barker came simultaneously to a threshold in his personal and artistic life" (49). These remarks—in addition to reflecting and corroborating Barker's avowed objectives of the "aesthetic will to experience"(122) and the ontological-ethical dimensions of *imagination* as evident in his Art of Theatre of Catastrophe (see Barker 1991; 35-7, 73-9, 93, 108, 119,passim; see also 2005, 1, 30, 74) epitomize the fraught occasion where art as "the form of possible experience" and art as "the reflection of real experience" converge and are folded upon one another (Deleuze 2004, 260-1)[49], while the question of ethics underpins the whole process.

[49] In his essay "The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy", Deleuze, in keeping with his ontology of immanence and transcendental empiricism, contends with Plato's hierarchy of Idea, copy and simulacrum as elaborated in *Republic* and other works. Copies have an internal resemblance and simulacra an external resemblance, simply "producing an effect of resemblance" (258), to the Idea. Deleuze - countering Plato's metaphysical dualism of model and copy, his denigration of simulacrum as the copy of a copy - argues that simulacrum exceeds the order of identity and resemblance; simulacrum is rather associated with "pure becoming". Deleuze defines simulacrum as "an image without resemblance" (257) and elsewhere as "systems in which different relates to different through difference itself" (1994, 277). In the first chapter of *Logic of Sense*, "First Series of Paradoxes of Becoming," Deleuze scrutinizing Platonic dualism lays bare a more fundamental dualism than that between the sensible and intelligible and model and copy, that is, the dualism between copy and simulacrum. He elaborates on it thus: "It is a more profound and secret dualism hidden in the sensible and material bodies themselves. It is a subterranean dualism between that which receives the action of the Idea and that which eludes this action. It is not the distinction between the Model and the copy, but rather between copies and simulacra" (1990, 2). Here is Deleuze's complete discussion of the notions indicated above: "Aesthetics suffers from a wrenching duality. On one hand, it designates the theory of sensibility, as the form of possible experience; on the other hand, it designates the theory of art as the reflection of real experience. For these two meanings to be tied together, the conditions of experience in general must become the conditions of real experience; in this case, the work of art would really appear as experimentation" (*Logic of Sense* 260). Deleuze characterizes simulacrum (and its operation and dynamics and mechanism) thus: "Between these basic series, a sort of internal resonance is produced; and this resonance induces a forced movement, which goes beyond the series themselves" (261)

Accordingly, ontological, aesthetic and ethical issues appear to constitute the recurrent motifs and pervasive concerns of *Gertrude*. In this essay, I diverge from the prevalent critical approaches hitherto adopted towards the play (see Rabey, Smith, Gritzner), which invariably tend to posit Gertrude as the cynosure of the play in two respects: as the paradigmatic *figure* of the play and as the *source* of the cry and its correlates (transgression, sacrifice and eroticism). It is my contention, however, that it is *the cry* that forms the eccentric centre of the play; in addition, I will interrogate the standard ascription of the cry to Gertrude, an approach which leaves many of the crucial concerns of the play unresolved. Based on this argument—and given the semantically and ontologically overdetermined nature of the cry (its irresolvably indeterminate relation to the body, subjectivity, the Other, and signification) coalesced with its being inextricably bound up with four fundamental preoccupations of the play (logos, Thanatos, pathos and Eros)—I propose the concept of "*acousmatic voice*" to be able to effectively capture and account for the aporetics of the cry as well as concomitant problematics of the play. It is my claim that the appropriation of such an equally charged and multivalent concept (acousmaticity), deployed both in philosophy and psychoanalysis, provides us with the viable conceptual means for tackling and unravelling the tensions and contradictions of the play and to explore the cry as *the event*. As I will demonstrate, the establishment of this argument also leads to reveal some of the pivotal features of Barker's later dramaturgy.

To this end, my discussion is composed of four interrelated parts. In the first part, I aim to establish the dramatic and philosophical centrality of the cry by eliciting ample textual evidence of its substantial role as regards the thematics of the play and the dynamics of the characters and their interrelations. Secondly, I suggest the eventful moments of proximal relation and radical transgression to entail a crisis-stricken mode of subjectivity and to be defiant of representation; and, thus, the compelling necessity for the cry with an acousmatic essence as the expression of the "event" and characters' mode of experience of the Impossibles. Thirdly, elaborating on the concept of acousmaticity, I expound its philosophical and psychoanalytical premises and dimensions juxtaposed with relevant facets of the play. Finally, predicated on the preceding arguments, I scrutinize the play and seek to substantiate the acousmaticity of the cry within it, striving to probe the implications and ramifications of this idiosyncrasy with relation to the preoccupations of the

characters; also evincing the trajectory of Barker's later work and the attitude towards and conception of self, Other and the nature of their relation in general.

The Ontological-Ethical Status of the Cry

The cry is both the blind spot of and the aperture of insight into *Gertrude*. The transgressive and excessive voice (the cry) that permeates the play features not only as its fulcrum,[50] but establishes itself as the ambivalent preoccupation of the characters in the play.[51] Indeed, more strictly, the cry features both as the ambivalent object of desire and cause of the abjection of desire for the characters. They not only strive to appropriate the cry, but come to identify with it or to define themselves by or against it. Hamlet feels burdened and agonized with the cry and seeks to control, constrain and even extirpate it. When Gertrude's cries, while in parturition pains, relentlessly cut across the scene, Hamlet's onslaught of words are expressive of the intensity of his bodily repulsion and moral opprobrium: "Disgusting / Disgusting/ Disgusting…DEGOUTANT / DEGOUTANT / ABSOLUMENT DEGOUTANT" (Barker2002, 64). Claudius avouches himself as "the student of her sounds" (2002,23) and Cascan declares himself not just familiar with Gertrude's cries but as "the connoisseur of its varieties" (2002, 11). Actually, Claudius is haunted by the cry and discloses it when he bitterly laments to Cascan: "THE QUEEN'SQUIET CASCAN / ISN'T SHE QUIET…QUIET AS THE GRAVE" (2002, 51).Elsewhere, pining for the cry, he moans: "(His hand to his ear) Shh / The wind yes (Pause) / I'm in such pain I'm in such pain / (He smothers his head in his hands and rocks from side to side.…Claudius howls)" (2002, 52). This obsession is carried to the extent that he even takes note of the precise length of time he has not heard the cry: "Three months apparently and you've made no cry" (2002, 42). Further in the play, Claudius interrogates Cascan: "Have you heard it? / I haven't / Not for weeks" (2002, 31). This attitude reaches its critical culmination in Claudius when he states: "I must have it / (Gertrude turns to him) / The cry Gertrude / I must drag that cry from you again if it weighs fifty bells or one

[50] The testimony to this proposition is not to be found solely in its pervasive presence or the scope of its transformative impact on characters and their interplay but its acting as the steering force as well as the bearer of the tensions and meanings of the play.

[51] It is ambivalent in the sense that though the characters endeavour to hold it in their grip, yet it appears to be the least objectifiable and object-like entity in the play and ironically they end up being held in its unrelenting grip.

thousand carcasses I must / IT KILLS GOD" (2002, 22). This utterance, besides revealing the existential urgency that impels the character to its pursuit, attests to some significant aspects—here, the transcendent dimension—of the cry which are at stake in the play.

If we were to predicate our whole exploration of the cry on a facile conception or interpretation of it, premised on Gertrude's own acknowledgment that: "The cry's betrayal / …And it comes from nowhere else" (2002, 44) joined to Bataille's argument that "The truth of eroticism is treason"4[52] (1986,171), and consider the cry as the mundane articulation of such moments, it would be at the expense of abolishing a major portion of the ambiguities and complications of the play as well as the whole (non-)truth and (non-)meaning5[53]of the cry. Nevertheless, as we will observe during our discussion, the cry is a profoundly over-determined, aporetic and spectral figure in the play, the nature of which defies being clinched with relating it solely to sexual eroticism and as an expression of infidelity. In fact, as will become apparent in the course of the play, the cry, as Saying (that mode of language/speech or *signifyingness* the function of which is or features as opening onto the Other rather than communication of a conventional or intentional signified, which is the function of the Said), primarily transpires as the betrayal of the Said and all its cognates (see Levinas 1998, 6-8).

In David Ian Rabey's discussion of the play, it is Gertrude who occupies the centre stage. Though there are references to the cry interspersed in his examination, yet there are mainly relegated to the fringes of the discussion. In addition, despite the fact that the word "sacred" itself is never mentioned by Rabey, yet from his sporadic descriptions and the associations he makes between the cry and other matters, we can infer that such an interpretation is implicit in his stance.

[52] Though it should be noted that, here, Bataille is also referring to eroticism as a perversion of sexuality as serving functionally in the profane world of restricted economy.

[53] I am wielding the negative conditional prefixes—"non"—in order to reflect the aporetic logic and nature of the cry which akin to the trace and différance eludes being thematized and conceptualized in terms of metaphysics of presence and transcendental egology of the thetic consciousness. More lucidly, I intend to convey the sense that the cry is not an essential entity and a unified meaning to be comprehended or disclosed as it belongs to the order of affectivity, trace of alterity, and the experience of the impossible. In this regard, in accord with the trace-like and différential nature of the cry, I am following Bernasconi's descriptive style while expounding the Derridean term "différance," which he delineates in quite analogous terms. Bernasconi, abiding by Derrida's own definitions of the term, calls "différance" "a non-word or non-concept" (Wood and Bernasconi 1985, 17) intending to accentuate the anti-logocentric nature of this notion andalso in order to demonstrate the fact that this aporetic term constitutes both the condition of possibility and the condition of impossibility of its own meaning and meaning qua meaning.

The evidences can be found where Rabey, based on Claudius' remark, identifies the cry with "an inhuman force, a principle of catastrophic life or vengeful god" (2003, 125); and further on as something which is "opposed or even inimical to human definition and form." He also passingly hints at the erotic and transgressive facets of the cry as "the juncture and meeting point of ecstasy and death" (2003, 87; see also 181, 41).

Andy W. Smith in his study of the play rightly hints at one of the cryptic and critical facets of the cry which is its being a fusion of "the sublime and the abject," stating:"[t]his cry becomes the transcendental moment that claims Gertrude as the object of this particular tragedy" (2006, 69). He, in his effort to unfold the nature of the cry, proceeds to establish a link between cry and Kristeva's notion of "amatory flash." Amatory flash, as Kristeva explains, sparks forth at the moment of transgressive eroticism and is a commingling of the "erotic fantasy" with "philosophical meditation" which is also a convergence of the sublime and the abject (1987, 66). The principal figure or sensory mode in Kristeva's essay, and on which Smith's discussion relies, is the visual. Kristeva, in her paper, demonstrates an attempt at analyzing and theorizing the literary techniques and approaches in amatory narrative which seek to render less invisible and more communicable what entirely eludes light of comprehension and representation and hence the discussion abounds in instances of binaries grounded in antithesis of the visible and the invisible (see 1987, 366). In this regard, Kristeva herself points to the notion of "idealization," present both in her analysis and this mode of narrative, which is indelibly attached to the amatory flash/narrative as a medium of representation and irremediably linked with manifestation. Along with the same line of argument and extending her metaphorical analogy, this implicit disposition is evident also in the contrast she establishes between "shooting star" (illustrating the amatory flash/narrative) and the "sunflower" (standing for the theological heliotropic narrative).

Nevertheless I would contend that Smith, by choosing such a metaphorical analogue for the epistemological investigation of the cry, and identifying it as the pivotal figure for its presentation, unwittingly blurs Barker's notable move in this regard, meaning, Barker's deployment of a sensory mode(aural/oral-con/tactile) which, in keen contrast to "the visual representation of the flash" (2002, 368), is not susceptible to specular adequation and objectifying manifestation. Appropriation of *fl ash* as the critical term and figurative analogue for elucidating the nature of the cry, by Smith, results in overlooking some crucial aspects of the cry, namely, its aural/oral,

chiasmatic (so contaminatingly con/tactile) as well as inter- and trans-corporeal character, both of which render it highly congruent with the nature of what it is supposed to be expressive of: *the trace of différance* (see Derrida 1976; 2001a, 85-6; and2001b, 230), and "pas au delà" of undergoing the Impossibles. Since "flash," however evanescent in its momentary flaring forth, is essentially visual and pertains to the order of the specular, spectacular and visible; it is liable to visual perception and thematization. Nevertheless, as adumbrated above, among the decisive properties of the cry are its being essentially acousmatic, ex/timate[54] and proximal (see Levinas 1998, 81-98; also see Libertson 1982,278-80), non-phenomenological features which constitute not only its intransigent resistance to the order of discourse, representation and manifestation but also its being radically adverse to specular logic and visual assimilation**.** In addition, the ethical and the inter/trans-corporeal dimensions of the cry also remain unattended by both critics.

It is my argument, however, that it is the cry, and not Gertrude, that proves to be the aporetic crux of the play. The cry, paradoxically, comes not only to incarnate, but to provide the context for the eventuation of the vexing concerns of the play—to wit, the Impossibles and inter-corporeal proximity—and these are rendered possible principally due to its being inherently *acousmatic*. In the ensuing argument, the theoretical basis is predicated on the notion of acousmatic voice and the cry as epitomizing such a condition. Accordingly, I shall strive to establish that the cry is acousmatic in four different respects: its source, its cause, its relation to the self and the relation between self, the Other and the cry. The premise that subtends my whole analysis is that the relationship between Gertrude and Claudius is a deeply ethical (in the sense articulated by Levinas and Deleuze variously, yet with striking affinities and convergences, as opposed to moral[55])

[54] The Lacanian "ex-timate object," an object at the very centre of psychic economies, is conceptualized as the threatening excluded term that can only appear retrospectively, through substitutive objects. This is an uncanny object that exists only *through*, *in* and *as* the process of its recurring or returning to haunt and 'counter-sign' intelligible and meaningful bodies. The 'extimate object' is neither interior nor exterior. As Mladen Dolar points out, it is 'located there where the most intimate interiority coincides with the exterior and becomes threatening, provoking horror and anxiety.' It is simultaneously 'the intimate kernel and the foreign body' (Dolar 1991,6). As Lacan explains: '*das Ding* is at the centre only in the sense that it is excluded. That is to say, in reality *das Ding* has to be posited as exterior…in the form of something *entfremdet*, something strange to me, although it is at the heart of me' (Lacan 1992, 71). For a suggestive reinterpretation of the Lacanian Real/Thing, see Žižek (1989; See esp. 169-99 and 131-136).

[55] Here I distinguish between morality and ethics. Given the constraints of space, I will clarify the opposition between the two approaches to ethology in a distilled account. By morality I intend an evaluative, normative, and prescriptive approach to or conception of ethics. More strictly, here, morality designates a set of allegedly abstract, universal and general imperatives and injunctions (under the rubric of rules for action and codes of conduct, and moral strictures) consolidated in the form of a transcendent system of judgment which valorizes and

relation, which manifests itself in eventful moments of intercorporeal proximity (or con/tactile aesth/ethics). My proposition is attested to by Barker's own description of the play as his "greatest work on love" (2007, 116). I would suggest that there are two principal points that binds them: the aesth/ethic love between them on the one hand, and their intimation of, and unremitting aspiration to, the Impossibles, partially eventuated in the cry, on the other.

The Event of the Impossibles and the Problematic of Representation

Barker affirms his being acutely aware of, and attentive to, the problematics of representation in moments of extremis both in general, and also with a particular focus on *Gertrude*. He, however, articulates and casts this problematic primarily in ethical, rather than solely aesthetic or representational, terms: "Barker thought all killing and all sex beyond the possibility of adequate

promotes unity. Kantian and Hegelian moral philosophies, and, also, religious understanding of morality are exemplary cases in point (see Hegel 1977; 10, 110, 260-1).

On the other hand, ethics, in my deployment of the term, qualified in accord with the demands and traits of Barker's catastrophic dramatic world, is predicated on the insights and philosophical propositions provided by two contemporary Continental philosophers: Levinas and Deleuze. Ethics, in my conception of the term, is defined in terms of proximity with alterity (the Other), transitivism of corporeal schemas, figural patterns and affective traces. Correspondingly, the ethical experience involves excendance of the autonomy of the transcendental egology, an ascendance beyond being and striving for self-preservation in an exposure and impassioned passivity towards the other. In Levinas' elaboration, morality signifies a gesture or move to achieve and constitute a totality and ethics is a movement or exposure towards an infinity (see 1979, 21). In other terms, to Levinas, ethics is first philosophy, prior even to ontology, and to think ethically is to think otherwise than being. Ethics entails an experience of the apprehension—prior to its comprehension as a hypostatized essence—of the other; an experience in which the affective dimension of the other is primary to discernible contours or articulable characteristics of the other. Accordingly, the ethical signifies a nonontological, non-cognitive, non-foundational, concrete and individual relation between two singular individuals; more strictly, it entails an immediate face-to-face encounter with the Other. As Levinas affirms: "Ethics is the putting into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the other" (1979, 43). Elsewhere he explicitly differentiates between morality and ethics term, elucidating his stance: "Moral consciousness is not an experience of values, but an access to an exterior being" (1990, 293).

In Deleuze's conception of ethics, we can detect significant resonances with that of Levinas, though in an admittedly different philosophical system. What can be inferred from Deleuze's intermittent and scattered engagements with the question of ethics is that he repudiates ethics as the formulation of normative principles preceding the confrontation with ethically demanding situation; rather, he endorses an ethics that is concerned with immanently-determined and singular catastrophic conditions of becoming-other in the encounter between self and the other, or self and an event which defies representation and identification (see Deleuze 1994, 35-42, 88-90). More strictly, in Deleuze's view, ethics consists in an immanent and dynamic conjunction of ethos and pathos with the primacy of the latter. Deleuze posits ethics as "a typology of immanent modes of existence [that] replaces Morality, which always refers existence to transcendent values. Morality is the judgment of God, the *system of Judgment*. But Ethics overthrows the system of judgment. The opposition of values (Good–Evil) is supplanted by the qualitative difference of modes of existence (good–bad)" (Deleuze 1988, 23).

representation in the theatre space—it was an ethical not a mimetic problem" (2007, 66). Now, by the same token, given the irreducibly multiplicitous and heterogeneous nature of the cry, Barker is confronted with an even more convoluted quandary: the question as to how such an apparently non-representable voice/sound can be (re)produced or (re)presented in a dramatic text and, even more problematically, a performance. The measures taken by Barker (as a director) to dramatize the cry and the attendant moments provide us with clue as to his conception of the nature of the cry as well as the intended manner of its dramatic presentation. Accordingly, in the account he presents in his pseudo-autobiography, *Styles and Its Origins*, Barker proceeds to explain how he had recourse to a variety of media and interwove them in order to devise a composite apparatus so as to figure the heterogeneous and multiplicitous nature of these eventful moments more viably. As he delineates, he accomplishes this task by splicing loops and snippets from three different composers in combination with pre-recorded scream/voice of Victoria Wicks, coupled with the installation or display of certain graphic and pictorial details projected onto the screen: "…in the sexual encounters of Gertrude and Claudius Barker eschewed a conventional representation of the act and relied for effect upon the startling image of the actress naked but for her shoes, taken standing from behind, all this accompanied by the harsh discordances of Ligeti" (2007, 66-7).

Accordingly, this reticulation of human, non-human, and inter-human sounds accentuates its non-naturalistic and non-anthropocentric character and definitely precludes the exclusive ascription of the cry to Gertrude. In this regard, the unobtrusive, yet noteworthy, point is that notwithstanding the far-reaching steps taken by Barker (the director) to adhere to and fulfill the essential complications of the cry, the produced cry in the performance should not be deemed equivalent to, or exhaustively reflective of the facets of, the cry as presented in the text, which is supposed to be *imagined* by the reader. As such, this also testifies to my proposition that the cry is both textual and non-textual, on the one hand; and both personal and impersonal, on the other; an aporia that will be delved into below.

As evident in the foregoing account, Barker's remarkable move in dealing with the transgressive moments of the Impossibles and selecting the apt medium for presenting them consists in two undertakings. The first comprises Barker's introduction of an a-phenomenon and a-form, the cry, which closely conforms to the dynamics of these (sub)liminal moments. Such moments by definition, defy the imposition of any form, disarray any order of mimetic

manifestation and are irreducible to discursive language (see Lyotard[56]). As such, the cry by its quasi- or non-linguistic, non-representational and non-discursive nature most intensely approximates such a condition. The second move involves endowing the cry with two closely-related features which here I have identified as acousmatic and proximal. *The acousmatic voice*, as I will expand upon below, ethically, ontologically and epistemologically owns a *chiasmatic status* (see Merleau-Ponty 1968, 130-155, 214-5) par excellence. The acousmatic "voice," as it features in *Gertrude*, as well as theoretically posited by Dolar (1991; 71-3, 101-3), features not only as an inter-weaving of self and the Other but also as a juncture between body and language. Hence, it is both language and the body and neither of them; indeed, it partakes of the traits of both yet exceeds them. Furthermore, by specifying the sense modality that informs this medium—the con/tactile and aural/oral—Barker emphatically accommodates it to the demands of the instant/event it is to express: the moments of con/tactile aesth/ethics or chiasmatic proximity between Gertrude and Claudius.

Accordingly, I would suggest, the following are among the main reasons Barker refuses to re-present the aforesaid events in the medium of discursive language and representation. Language is a tool of social order and meaning which accords a circumscribed "position" (thetic, socio-political and moral)to the self-conscious subject. Language also posits intentions, and hence identity or at least a virtual subjectivity-intentionality; whereas the pure affectivity which is released in the cry has no such specificity and the lacerating charge of this affective experience depositions the subject, exceeding its volition, conscious intention and individuality, continually making it other(see Levinas 1998, 100-2). Bataille's delineation of ecstatic experience corresponds to the aforementioned effects: "I become aware of my ecstasy only in retrospect, and even then only the sensation of an effect coming from the outside…. In reality, I am acted upon" (1988, 60). As such, the cry is of the order of an affective event which surges forth from an interior exteriority

[56] In "After the Sublime: The State of Aesthetics," Lyotard approaches the occurrence of the sublime event (and its presentation in art) in terms of the relation between form and matter. Partly subscribing to Kant, Lyotard contends that in the experience of the sublime, matter is invoked in a way "that is not finalized, not destined." Sublime matter is that which resists the imposition of forms and concepts. As Lyotard explains, "The paradox of art 'after the sublime' is that it turns towards a thing which does not turn itself towards the mind" (1991: 141–2). Thus, sublime matter is paradoxically "immaterial" in so far as an object or thing becomes material only when subjected to the operation of the mind: 'For forms and concepts are constitutive of objects, they produced at a that can be grasped by sensibility and that are intelligible to the understanding. The matter I'm talking about is "immaterial," an-objectable, because it can only "take place" or find its occasion at the price of suspending these active powers of the mind'
(1991, 140). See also Lyotard (1994)

and an exterior interiority (see Libertson 1982, 6, 25, 104, passim). Language also presupposes a degree of generality, intelligibility, universality and exchangeability, since no signification is entirely singular; as Derrida cogently argues: "The first effect or first destination of language therefore deprives me of, or delivers me from, my singularity. By suspending my absolute singularity in speaking, I renounce at the same time my liberty and my responsibility. Once I speak, I am never and no longer myself, alone and unique" (2008, 61).Yet the eventful moments such as con/tactile proximity, plethoric sacrifice and above all the gift of death are not liable to such generality and do not comply with the imperatives of the symbolic order. Premised on the foregoing points, Barker by deciding not to present such eventful instants in the order of language, but to figure them in a borderline medium—the cry—acts infidelity to the exigencies of the "event" (See May). As Hamlet professes: "Language [as deployed in the symbolic order] is hopeless" (2002, 54) in such instants (See Lyotard 2009, 16-19, 60-71; Docherty 113-26; and Barthes 1998, 55-7).

The foremost point to be established with regard to the relation between the cry and the Impossible(s)[57] is the substantial evidence that confirms the cry's being an expression of the Impossibles. No matter which of the permutations or manifestations of the Impossibles we consider at each specific occasion, the invariable idiosyncrasy of all of them is their non-iterability, singularity, alterity and hence eventfulness. Part of the evidence that we should construe "the cry as an event" is that it is unrepeatable. It cannot be reproduced and is not amenable to mimesis; each time it is emitted, the magnitude, the (non)meaning and the ramifications vary from one occasion to another; a fact of which all the main characters, including Cascan, Claudius, and Gertrude are acutely cognizant. This surfaces when Cascan draws Claudius' attention to the cry's being "unrepeatable surely" (Barker2002, 16). Elsewhere Cascan insightfully hints at the unrepresentability and inimitability of the cry and associates it with spontaneity, transgression, extreme exposure to exteriority and desire; characteristics which coalesce to make the cry an event: "Nevertheless I daresay you would not be gratified if my lady stooped to imitate a thing so rare and reverenced as this exclamation is…. Merely to perform what has been so spontaneous an utterance would compromise the depths of her desire and humiliate her perfect and pathetic

[57] Hereafter, to refrain from repeating the brackets each time, I will simply write it as Impossibles though it is intended to be read with brackets inserted and retained.

nakedness I daresay" (2002, 33). Gertrude herself strenuously insists on the authenticity and eventfulness of her cries and refuses to (re)produce a cry "on demand" by Claudius: "MY CRY IS NEVER FALSE…You know it's never false and if it falters if it dies I won't pretend it Claudius I will not lie however wonderful my lying is" (2002, 22). When Claudius longingly demands her cry, in a rather imperative tone tinged with an inclination to generalization and banalization: "Gertrude / Do what I say…Even if you lack the inspiration if it is an empty gesture women do it all the time don't they" (2002, 21), she declines to act in accordance, not only because she wills not to will it as such but also because she cannot will it.

Eventually, the cry's being "eventful" is reflected in its incommensurable and figural nature. As regards the mode or the technique that Barker selects to render the cry, he resorts neither to image nor metaphor; indeed his approach proves to be highly apposite to the demands and properties of the momentous event, since cry, substantially-materially and structurally, is a fugitive figura (see Barthes 2002, 3-8; and Auerbach 1984, 13-352003, 44-49), which traverses both horizontally and vertically. I posit that the relation between voice/cry and language/the signifier is premised on "différance" (in the Derridean sense of the term). Accordingly, the relationship between voice and sense (the signified or meaning) is *zeugmatic*, *aporetic* and *chiasmatic* and hence is not reducible to a dialectical relation with voice/cry as the meaningless vector or carrier of meaning. Accordingly, the cry is both form and force *blocked together*,[58] (in)formed by over-determination and superimposition. The cry, as it is present in the play is, on the one hand, the extension or expansion of language, and on the other hand the transcendence, transgression and extenuation of language; as if with each issuing of the cry, language is splintered and lingers behind the cry; yet, in addition to this collapse of the spectacle of sense or meaning, it simultaneously hints at a host of meanings (deemed untapped, inscrutable or even absurd before) and also acts as the condition of meaning. This erosive impact on discursive reason and referential/representational language is articulately bemoaned by Hamlet: "I am saying less (Pause) / I am saying less and the reason I am saying less is that speech falters speech flinches when horror lifts a fi st to it(Pause) / The more horror the less speech I don't say I am the first person who appreciates this" (2002, 54).

[58] In Lyotardian sense of the word (see 2009, 296).

Indeed, the play abounds in explicit and implicit linguistic demonstrations[59] that foreground the way limit-experiences defy discursive language and disrupt its logic of relation and definition of sense; and when the characters are prompted by an irresistible urge to give voice to the intensity of their cataclysmic ordeals, or to an affective trace traversing them yet other than them, their speech cracks, is fissured and beset with absence and *an-archy* (see Levinas 1998, 101) in consequence, or in anticipation of, the cry. Cascan's remark testifies to the point: "In a strange and sinister equation the more we tell the more untold becomes agony and even that which was once said becomes unsayable (Pause)" (2002, 42). Elsewhere in the play, the recondite and equivocal relation that Hamlet establishes between love and language is more eloquent—language as saviour, language as failure: "There is love and if the love is terrible it runs out of language and in *this agony of language* this dying of the language the *coming in* alone can save the love from dying with the language the love which otherwise would howl of wordlessness like *a starved dog* nailed into a room implores the coming in to save it I am saying the coming in does not come first how can it come before the love implores *it how it how it's how*" (2002, 27; my italics). This is a performative language, or more strictly, a punctumic-figural language.[60] This is a kinetic text that "claws" (see Beckett's commentary on *Endgame*) and the figural analogy(between dog and language) depicts Hamlet as the dog who is howling in this "vocal writing" (see Barthes 1998, 66); indeed the repeated "hows" at the tail end of Hamlet's gestural speech echo the "howl of wordlessness" *working* both as an expression (of desperation and desire) and yet a sensible interrogation. In another highly *aposiopetic* and *elliptical*[61] remark by Hamlet, we observe not only a figural analogue, but the corporeal manifestation of such affective states in the totality of the expressive behaviour: "And my best friend has already (His mouth goes stiff) / My best friend having (Stiffly) My mother then (He shakes his head) / WORDS HOPELESS HERE / (He shakes his head more violently)" (2002, 54).

[59] For instances of their pause-pocked, silence-ridden and compulsively repetitive language see Barker (2002; 43, 54, 59, 61, passim).

[60] The conjunction is mine; for an extensive definition of the former term see Barthes (1998:26-7, 42-7) and for the latter term see Lyotard (2009; 14-27, 51, 75).

[61] Both rhetorical devices notably enhance the corporeal dimensions of expression and speech; for a further elaboration of the significance and recurrence of the aposiopesis and ellipsis in Barker's work see Elisabeth Angel-Perez's "Facing Defacement" and Thomas Freeland's "The End of Rhetoric and the Residuum of Pain," respectively.

As such, here we evidently witness notable affinities between Barker and Bataille regarding the deep distrust and doubt they share on the function and contribution of language (particularly discursive-representational language) in such moments. Here Bataille's compelling statement attests to the way the mode and medium of expression arising from and (presumed to be) corresponding to such excessive moments must be a self-effacing, self-violating language itself, otherwise they are sham or a failure: "the world of words is laughable. Threats, violence and blandishments of power are part of silence. Deep complicity can't be expressed in words" (Bataille 1988, 40). He pushes the issue to its extreme point by asserting that: "Eroticism is silence" (1986, 264). Nevertheless, I would contend that, Barker, due to his enhanced and extended conception of language and textuality coalesced with the irrevocable and indelible *dramatic nature of his text* and the consequent access to a broader range and means of aesthetic presentation (his incorporation of various aesthetic media and modalities, particularly music, painting and kinetic/choreography performance) constitutes a far more overlaid and complex relation between language (speech), body and the relation with the Other; and hence he holds a more optimistic attitude with respect to the capacity of language.

Accordingly, the cry broached from another perspective can be taken to embody the voice or expression of the Impossible. As Bataille argues, the Impossible and its correlates all lie beyond discursive language. Thus, Barker by conjuring the cry and putting it into Gertrude's *inter-corporeal flesh*, purports to illustrate its being a projection or expression which reaches beyond her flesh and language and yet is both infinitely immanent and transcendent(in Levinasian sense of the word) to both of them. Here, concerning the aesthetic/critical rendition of the cry, I would like to draw an analogy (drawing on Bataille's own indication) concerning respective conceptions of and ways of dealing with the (re)presentation of the cry by Barker and Bataille, as Bataille himself contrasts the way Levinas' proposed notion of the "il y a" features in his own and Blanchot's work. "Levinas says of *Thomas the Obscure* that they are a description of il y a (there is). This is not quite right: Levinas describes the il y a (there is); Maurice Blanchot somehow screams it" (206). So the same comparative commentary, I believe, holds for the relation between Barker and Bataille's respective approaches to and treatment of the presentation or figuration of the Impossibles: if Bataille's fictional work manages to intimate the way to the Impossible or to reveal the trace or shadow of the Impossible in his disrupted narrative, *Gertrude* screams the

Impossibles. It is not even a movement by language away from language (as it is usually the case in Bataille) it however, is the onslaught or upsurge of a ravishing force which lacerates the fabric of language *dramatically*.

Barker's move in this regard (his treatment of the non-discursive) is akin to Derrida's elaboration of the logic of Bataille's work: "The writing of sovereignty places discourse *in relation to* absolute non-discourse. Like general economy, it is not the loss of meaning, but…*the 'relation to* this loss of meaning'….The known is related to the unknown, meaning to non-meaning" (Derrida 2001, 270-71). This "relation" and its nature are pivotal to the ethicity and authenticity of the rendering and treatment of the event (and the Impossibles) and even more crucial is that, this relation between the two is not a dialectical but a proximal and chiasmatic relation. Such a writing exceeds the confines of meaning and subjectivity yet remains tangential to them.

The Acousmatic Voice

Predicated on the preceding discussion, the transgressive sound or voice(the cry), as it features in the play, is treated neither as an object of aesthetic appreciation and veneration—an approach which perverts the voice into a fetish object and reifies it[62]—nor is it present as solely a receptacle containing meaning or a medium for the conveyance of meaning; word as the telos of the voice and voice as the vehicle of the word: a Wittgensteinian ladder to be discarded upon the establishment or achievement of meaning (See Dolar1991, 15). In contrast to the two foregoing approaches, I assume the cry to be an acousmatic voice or (non)phenomenon. Indeed, its being essentially extimate and epistemologically-ontologically ambiguous as well as its being susceptible of being "informed" (both in the literal and Bataillian sense of the term) by eroticism, transgression and sacrifice is primarily to be attributed to its being acousmatic.

The term *acousmatic*, critically, was first introduced by Michel Chion (1982) who borrowed the word from Pierre Schaeffer. He identifies the first known usage and source of the "acousmatic."

[62] The cry is never and nowhere in the play described as beautiful in the common perception of the word—yet quite contrarily is depicted in excessive terms of being disgusting, dreadful, magnificent or sublime, and whenever it looms it reverberates as a (non)human music of extremes (2002, 10).

Originally the term was wielded as an epithet for Pythagoras' disciples and pupils who followed his teachings without being able to see him as he was concealed by a curtain for five years, a situation which can be construed as the very root of the logocentric philosophical tradition. Accordingly, an acousmatic voice, as defined by Chion and as reformulated by Dolar, is a voice whose source and cause are indefinite, undecidable and unknown. The first two problematic traits of the acousmatic voice pose this grave question: "can we actually ever pin it down to a source?"(1991, 67) The source of the acousmatic voice can never be seen, it stems from an undisclosed and structurally concealed exterior or interior. Thus, it designates a voice without a body attached to it and hence its uncanny effect; as Chion asserts: "The acousmatic situation… entails that the idea of the cause seizes us and haunts us" (Chion 1998, 201; qtd. in Dolar1991, 67). According to Dolar what renders the acousmatic voice even more uncanny and paradoxical is that even when a certain body is determined as the cause or source of the voice and the voice is fastened onto that body, the effect is not diminished or dissipated. Hence, it is a voice in search of an origin, in search of a body, but even when it finds its body it turns out that the voice does not stick to the body, "it is an excrescence which doesn't match the body" (1991, 60-61). As such, by virtue of its covert origin and its abject status, the acousmatic voice assumes aura, authority and surplus meaning. But as I will explain more below this is not the whole story.

The third feature concerns the relation between the self from whom the voice is presumed to issue and the voice. In keeping with the points posed above, the corollary of such attributes is that, there is always something totally incongruent in the relation between the possible/visible source of the voice (the appearance, the aspect, of a person) and the voice itself: "The fact that we see the aperture does not demystify the voice; on the contrary, it enhances the enigma" (1991, 70). The voice conceived and considered as such acts contrary to the prevalent function and operation accorded to the voice in philosophical tradition and consequently runs counter to Derrida's idea of metaphysics of presence and does not fall prey to his critique of phonocentrism (phonocentrism which, according to him, privileges the voice as a source of an originary self-presence). Thus, in the case of acousmatic voice "S'entendre parler" or hearing oneself speak (which is the primal constitutive of the illusion of interiority and ultimately of consciousness and autonomy) is no longer conducive to the re-assertion of self-identity, self-coincidence and self-presence; rather, it paradoxically instigates an interruption or disruption in the self and occasions the recognition of a

yawning gap between the self and the voice. Žižek's statement confirms the point at stake: "An unbridgeable gap separates forever a human body from its voice. The voice displays a spectral autonomy, it never quite belongs to the body we see, so that even when we see a living person talking, there is always a minimum of ventriloquism at work: it is as if the speaker's own voice hollows him out and in a sense speaks "by itself," through him" (Žižek2001, 58). Thus one could argue that the acousmatic voice can induce both abjection and sublimation, as the voice itself is neither an objectifiable voice nor a voice which could be attributed to a certain subject; furthermore, the person who hears it is smitten with an analogous affective alteration.

Another factor that enhances the disorienting quality of the voice and paves the way for the emergence of the alterity implicit in the equivocal structure of the voice is the very intrinsic logic of the aural/ vocal. As opposed to the illusory logic of the visual/visible (which is that of distance, stability and safety), with the reverberation of the vocal or aural/audible, such are assuring detachment and division crumbles; as such the most fundamental divide—that between interiority and exteriority and/or between ipseity and alterity which is "the model of all other metaphysical divides" (Dolar 1991, 38)—founders. The voice directly pierces the interior and suffuses it to the extent that the very status of the exterior becomes dubious, and it invariably discloses the interior to the extent that the very supposition of an interior is contingent on the voice. As Dolar observes: "What is exposed [in the voice]…is an interior which is itself the result of the signifying cut, its product, its cumbersome remainder, an interior created by the intervention of the structure"(1991, 80). The notable point, which has a direct bearing on *Gertrude* too, is that voice owing to its exposing the hidden structural intimacy and complicity between self and the Other so excessively is accompanied by an effect—or, rather an affect—of shame (1991, 119). Hence, we could conclude that the logic of voice or that of the oral/aural is that of inevitable exposure, contact, contamination, contagion and implication. As such voice proves to be an essentially intermediary, tenuous and fluid space, ceaselessly swinging between an interior exteriority and an exterior interiority; the token of absence and separation, and the mark of an impossible presence, a phantom of presence, invoking death at its heart. This intercorporeal space is a simultaneously positive and negative space in which self and the Other coincide in their "lack"; and as Dolar contends this voice is "the incarnation of their lack" (1991, 93).

To elicit a link from the foregoing points so as to proceed to the last idiosyncrasy of the voice, we could distill that with the acousmatic voice the origin is originally lost or multiplicitous; here the original scene is "ob-scene and uncanny" (1991, 126). In contradistinction to the metaphysical propensity (which strives to maintain the purity of the origin against supplementarity/alterity) the trace of alterity is not only inerasable from the acousmatic voice but foregrounds the structural self-division and alterity-permeation inhering the voice. This crucial idiosyncrasy immediately evokes the fourth feature of acousmatic voice which is the manifold and highly ambivalent relation between self, the Other and the voice involved in the acousmatic voice. The theoretical-philosophical ground of this proposition can be derived from both Lacan (in whose psychoanalytic theory self is that signifier whose signified, being the Other, is forever and irretrievably missing) and Levinas (his account of the ontological priority of the Other) though they belong to different disciplines (see Voruz 2007, 137-145).

Here the double-edged nature of the acousmatic voice as adumbrated above comes to the fore: voice as an authority over the Other and, yet more importantly, voice as an exposure to the Other. As Dolar cogently observes "One is too exposed to the voice and the voice exposes too much, one incorporates and one expels too much" (Dolar 1991, 81) No sooner has the self produced a voice/cry that one is also "always-already" yielding power to the Other; the silent listener is in the position of decision over giving recognition, attention and intention. In Dolar's words: "The subject is exposed to the power of the other by giving his or her own voice, so that the power, domination, can take not only the form of the commanding voice, but that of the ear. The voice comes from some unfathomable invisible interior and brings it out, lays it bare, discloses, uncovers, reveals that interior" (1991,80). Both receiving and emitting a voice thrust out an excess, a surplus of exposure and vulnerability on the one hand, and a surplus of authority on the other. The elusive presence of this excess, this "constitutive asymmetry" in the voice (1991, 81), an asymmetry between the voice stemming from the other and one's own voice figures as an ethical guarantor in the relation; as it is the sustainer or mainstay of the difference and the vital écart or distance(see Merleau-Ponty 1968) between the two. The voice, as the excess of the demand of the Other, the demand beyond any particular demands, and at the same time, the demand posed to the Other features as an opening to and of a radical alterity through or from which truth or event emerges.

Consequent upon the notion of the acousmatic as a voice without a body(its being unattachable to a certain body), the voice as the remainder, excess or the trace, there emerges another uncanny ramification of such an attribute; that the third (interfacial-interstitial) space which this voice constitutes and to which it pertains is not solely to be restricted to a space between self and the Other yet simultaneously it beckons to a space beyond; a dimension transcendent to both self and the Other, the secret and affective perception of which both share (see Levinas 1986, 345–59; and Levinas 1998, 12, 20, 79).This voice is never determinable either as personal or impersonal, individual or universal.

Acousmaticity of the Cry

Before embarking on an in depth engagement with the demonstration of the status and essence of the cry, establishment of its acousmaticity and presenting manifestations of its acousmatic nature in the play, I would rather schematically delineate the four fundamental causes or correlates of the cry in Gertrude as an initial step onto our exploration of the play. This excursion helps us contextualize our argument more fully and provides us with a ground for a clearer apprehension of the significance and implications of the cry's acousmatic status in relation to characters and their concerns. It also accords us a broader perspective onto the play in terms of it's thematic premises, its dynamics as well as the preoccupations of characters, because, as it will become evident, these four correlates or sense-dimensions of the cry are inextricably entangled with the significance and facets of the cry as an acousmatic voice/sound.

As hinted above, regarding the causes and correlates of the cry, when we meticulously survey the play, we can argue that the cry is starkly marked by and associated with four principal issues: logos, Eros, pathos, and above all, Thanatos. Given the remit of the chapter and the scope of the subject at issue here, it suffices to sketch them out and elaborate on each briefly. Throughout the play, the cry's invariable link with Logos (as representing transcendent truth, meaning, law, unity, totality and metaphysics of presence) is primarily intimated by Claudius. Claudius seeks the cry (initially conceived as belonging to Gertrude and embodying Eros and/or Thanatos) and appeals to it as a force or phenomenon totally countering or opposing Logos. This sense is evident in his remark to Gertrude: "I must have it (Gertrude turns to him) / The cry Gertrude / I must drag that

cry from you again if it weighs fifty bells or one thousand carcasses I must / IT KILLS GOD" (Barker 2002,22). Elsewhere, he more adamantly professes his transgressive endeavours through Gertrude (presumed as incarnating the cry) as being invariably oriented towards Logos: "Gertrude it is God I'm fighting when I fight in you"(2002, 44).

At times the specifications and descriptions that are made of the cry approach the characteristics attributed respectively to the all-encompassing force of being and continuity, more strictly as a sacred and immanent force(as posited by Bataille), or the transcendental Logos of metaphysics, or even the essential human relationality in the mode of proximal eroticism. In the ensuing remarks almost all four dimensions are tacitly and intimately entangled: "I REQUIRE THE REAL CRY CASCAN ALL MY LIFE I SOUGHT ITSINCE I WAS A BOY AND PRIOR YES PRIOR TO BOYHOOD." Further ahead he asserts: "IT IS THE CRY OF ALL AND EVERY MOVING THINGAND ALL THAT DOES NOT MOVE BONE BLOOD AND MINERAL"(2002, 32). Probably the most explicitly perceptible implication of the cry is eroticism. In the first scene, the cry which reverberates throughout is a fusion of transgressive eroticism, sacrificial death of the king, vocalizations, desperately vocalized yearnings for a heteronomous ontology, proximity, and chiasmatic self-excendance. Accordingly, in the light of the above characterization of the cry as a fundamentally chiasmatic (see Merleau-Ponty1968; 133-150, 265-6), as an entre-deux phenomenon that possesses a fleshly, forceful and fluid character and eludes self-appropriation and self-reflection(see Dolar 1991, 102), as already hinted at, we can identify the acousmatic cry (along with fluids and denudation), in the play as one of the main loci in which inter-corporeal proximity with alterity and trans-corporeal reaching towards the Impossibles (transcendence) are actualized.

The cry, in a superimposed sense, also incorporates pathos. Pathos, as I intend it here, signifies a twofold affectivity and incompossibility of utmost propinquity (obsessive affectivity of rapport and excessive intimacy) streaked and traversed with the indelible trace of pure differance, an irrevocable écart (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 124). Conceptually, pathos derives from the sense of the term as articulated initially by Nietzsche in the mode of *pathos of distance* and later elaborated and extended in a radically recast conception of ethics by Levinas. As such, it entails and comprises proximity and chiasmatic duality in the texture of the acousmatic cry. I would suggest that *pathos*

can be deemed here to designate departure from ethos and logos and consequently incarnating pure affectivity, sensibility, exposure, and responsivity. Nietzsche identifies the pathos of distance as "that longing for an ever increasing widening of distance" (1973, 173) within the self, which effects the enhancement and elevation of the self towards rarer, tenser and more comprehensive states realized through continual "self-overcoming and taking a moral formula in a supra-moral sense" (173). Thus, the pathos of distance can be succinctly defined as "the condition of transient affectivity" (Diprose 2002, 29) which is indispensable for both the formation of relation of the self with other-than-the-present self and with the Other. Levinas discerns "pathos" as an essential affect as well as modality and logic of relationality integral to the erotic, amorous and ethical relationship which is an intrinsically embodied passivity and inter-subjective investiture lived in the first person accusative. In his characterization, pathos is a term whose correlates are love, proximity, and irreducible alterity.15[63] By the same token, and given the inextricable metonymic relation between the three figural analogues of the affect of proximity, meaning the cry, denudation, and overflowing of fluids, somewhere in the play Cascan calls Gertrude's nakedness "pathetic." Claudius is astounded and asks: "Why pathetic…Why pathetic nakedness?" to whom Cascan responds: "All love is pathetic is it not my lord?" (Barker, 2002, 63).

Although there occur numerous moments in the play that exemplify the pathos at issue here, however, no moment of pathos is more paradigmatic than the profoundly ambivalent moment of the death of Claudius in the final scene; an eventful moment which can be considered as both a moment of radical sacrifice (of Claudius) as well as that of the gift of death (from Gertrude to Claudius). This moment of death, since it precedes the most recondite, cryptic and harrowing emission of the cry throughout the play, also testifies to the intimate link between the cry and the ethical import of the affect of pathos. In fact, the impassioned passivity embodied by Claudius in conceding to his death in the ensuing passages evinces the extent of his pathos in this scene: duality" (1987, 94).

[63] 15 In this regard Levinas observes: "The idea of a love that would be a confusion between two beings is a false romantic idea. The pathos of the erotic relationship is the fact of being two, and that the other is absolutely other" (1985, 66). Elsewhere, he proceeds to juxtapose pathos with its cognates recapitulating it in conceptually more specific terms: "I have tried to find the temporal transcendence of the present toward the mystery of the future. This is nota participation in a third term…It is a collectivity that is not a communion. It is the face-to face without intermediary, and is furnished for us in the eras where, in the other's proximity, distance is integrally maintained, and whose pathos is made of both this proximity and this

> Gertrude: CLAUDIUS YOUR DEATH IS NEXT (Pause) / I shuddered when I knew it I SAY DEATH I MEAN SOME WRITHINGMURDER call it death (Pause) / Not today not imminently to day is grief today is silent walking and staring in the pool of memory terrible reflections in the pool and self-disgust…
> Claudius: Yes (Pause)
> Gertrude: Oh do you know it yes you do you know it too I shuddered when did you know how long have you / CONCEALED YOUR (She glares) / I COULD STRIKE YOU
> Claudius: I love you
> Gertrude: I COULD STRIKE YOU / (She sways. A pause. Her hand rises and falls) / My darling / Get out of my sight / (2002, 82-3)

Ultimately, it is however noteworthy that the cry in addition to being partially coeval and suffused with the foregoing points, is almost in all occasions concomitant with death and incarnates the death-drive or thanatos thereby emerging as the affective-expressive release of thanatos in the throes and/or at the very terminus of acts of sacrifice or transgression, intimating that the ultimate reaches of life, self, relation, and death have been bordered on. Both Gertrude and Claudius seem to be driven by thanatotic urge, yet not the normal or suicidal senses or even in the sacrificial mode by Law—but death of an essentially different order: the aporetic gift of death (see Derrida 2008,36-82; see also Derrida 1993, 31-35, 37-41). Claudius on hearing Gertrude's lacerating cries tersely asserts that her cries might be attributed to an aporetic craving for reaching death (of self or as release from the ontological logic of the present world) and yet overcoming or surpassing death while being harrowingly cognizant of its impossibility, that is, recognizing that very mortality as the condition of possibility of that impossibility (Barker 2002, 67). This is manifested in the radical and consequential sacrifice and eroticism they undergo, but more saliently in the gift of death (radical sacrifice) which the last scene epitomizes.

Now, if we scrutinize the cry, as it recurrently reverberates in the play, with the characteristics expatiated above in view, all textual evidences prove to testify to its acousmaticity in all four senses of the term. Firstly, the source of the cry is unidentifiable and uncertain. In

Gertrude we face a double bind or dilemma: that the cry cannot be demystified and the source cannot be determined even when the origin is ostensibly laid bare. It is irresolvably both overt (Gertrude's mouth/body) and covert (something extrinsic to Gertrude's body, something inscrutable and incognito). As such, it seems to arise both from the flesh of the world and flesh of the individual, the landscape and the bodyscape. Throughout the play, the emergence of the cry is ascribed to different sources by different characters, sources which are not necessarily discrepant and carry all the following possibilities.

Apparently the cry arises from Gertrude. In the course of the play, however, there surface other tokens that impugn the certainty and clarity of Gertrude's being its source and imply sources which prove to be *transcendent* [64]to her. There are passages which definitely ascribe the agency of the cry to Gertrude (See 2002, 10, 11, 22, 31, passim) and some others that contravene this very opinion. Claudius wonders: "Always I thought the cry was in you/ But it's not / It's outside / It waits / It walks / Some long hound pacing the perimeter / Frost clinging to it / Clouds of breath" (2002, 87). Another substantial evidence emerges at the very end of the play when she issues the last cry; the stage note reads: "her great cry comes, not from herself, but from the land. She is seized by it" (2002, 92). Cascan perceptively does not try to confine the cry solely to one source and realizes that an array of contiguous or tangential causes are required to converge into the creation of the cry: "this cry I heard beyond the orchard wall and marveled at its depth its resonance I do not honestly expect to hear its like again what could give birth to such a cry a dying husband an impatient lover supremely beautiful (Gertrude weeps)" (2002, 11).

The second trait of the cry as an acousmatic voice concerns its deeply equivocal relation to self. Though Gertrude might appear as the phantasmatic figure of plenitude to most characters in the play who are dwellers of restricted economy and the symbolic world including Hamlet, Ragusa and Albert (to them, she is both the desirable object and the subject of desire),yet she does not feature thus to the later Claudius. One of the revealing moves in this regard is that her being inhabited with the cry is depicted in such a manner which adumbrates her being inhabited with a

[64] The word 'transcendent' which I am using here is two-fold; it signifies both an immanent transcendent (an entity or origin absolutely exterior to Gertrude and her body), something either radically arcane—a Bataillian sacred source—or something apparently more mundane and palpable such as nature or the Other; on the other hand, transcendent can designate something transcendental or metaphysical (see Merleau-Ponty 1968; 107, 211).

vacuity or void. Gertrude is not presented to be in possession of the cry and there abides a deeply ambiguous and différed relation between them on which I will elaborate later.

There are numerous instances which bear witness to her lacking or losing control over the cry or her treating it as an entity or phenomenon exterior to herself that overpowers and inhabits her. Towards the end of the play Claudius comes to realize the acousmatic-proximal nature of the cry and deems it erroneous to ascribe the agency of the cry to Gertrude: "I DON'T KNOW IF IT IS…/ The cry is more than the woman…/ The woman is the instrument / not from the woman comes the cry" (2002, 54). Elsewhere more lucidly Gertrude herself in conjunction with reference to the decentering influence of the cry, attests to the fact that the scope and magnitude of the cry by far exceed her existential (both carnal and spiritual) dimensions: "The cry / cry / Bigger / Bigger / Yes / BIGGER THAN MY BODY CLAUDIUS / Yes/ (*Horrified*)" (2002, 80). The eventual irrefutable testimony to the acousmatic nature of the cry and Gertrude's proximal relation with it evinces itself in the moment of Claudius' death. There we read: "Gertrude…goes to him, takes his head in her hands, as she does so, her great cry comes, not from herself, *but from the land*. *She is seized by it*. Claudius is dead and she struggles with the weight of his body" (2002, 92; my italics). The indicated source is at the farthest remove from her body; and thus the origin is attributed to the most exterior or heterogeneous phenomenon possible: the land. Here, the gap or disparity between the two conceivable sources is so vast that to reconcile them seems almost impossible. In addition to cry's being bodily explicitly estranged from her, we observe that she cannot exert her personal volition or intention and just yields to its advent. The flagrant consequence of this is the simultaneous expansion and diminution of individual ego/self and corporeal boundaries. She is almost entirely possessed by and enveloped with the cry.

The third attribute of the cry is the ambivalent yet fundamental relation it holds with the Other. The cry appears to be the call (and trace) of both the Other within (an immemorial beyond in the most intimate recesses of the self (see Levinas 1998, 86, 103, and Libertson 1982, 6-7, 48) and the call to the Other without (see Bataille 1988 and Blanchot 1986). At the scene when Gertrude and Claudius have colluded to poison Hamlet, at Hamlet's swallowing the contents of the glass of wine, she is so ruthlessly possessed with the eructation of the cry that she cannot bring her crying to a halt or throttle it. In other words, she is issuing the cry *despite herself* (see Levinas

1998, 52-4), as if it is wrung from her by an adverse and compulsive force engulfing her. In response to Claudius' ceaseless demands, she desperately beseeches: "OHSTOP / OH STOP" (2002, 78). Further ahead, again barraged with his calls, she states: "I CAN'T / I CAN'T (Her hands move as if she were grappling an invisible opponent)" (68). In the scene where they are all attending Hamlet's funeral, Claudius intuits the impending advent of the cry and as if the cry is lying dormant somewhere infinitely interior and infinitely exterior to both of them, he says to Gertrude: "The cry…Waiting"; to which Gertrude replies: "CALL IT / CALL IT" (87). This dialogue verifies not only the degree to which the extimate (and/or the heteronomous) is implicated in the issuing of the cry but also the extent the production of the cry relies on the presence and desire of the Other. There are other occasions that this Other and its call as well as its exigency indicate an impersonal, atheological and more comprehensive force, though.[65]

In Heidegger[66] and partially in Merleau-Ponty (see 1968, 170, 179, 212;see also Kleinberg-Levin 53-98) the call and response to it are an opening to *Being*, whereas in Levinas (and again partly Merleau-Ponty), the voice or the cry is an exposure or opening to *Otherwise-than-Being* (The Other which is non-ontological and/or hauntological): "Indeed the call is precisely something which we ourselves have neither planned nor prepared for, nor voluntarily performed, nor have we ever done so. "It" calls against our expectations and even against our will…. The call comes from me and yet from beyond me" (Heidegger 1973, 320). I would suggest that the nature of the cry in Barker's *Gertrude*, partakes of both dispositions; meaning that, it is both an exposure to Being as the immanent Wild Logos (the sacred realm of general economy) and also to Otherwise-than-Being as the transcendent Autrui or L'autre (inextricably associated with Eros-Thanatos as well as

[65] See Bataille (1986, 99).

[66] In *Being and Time*, unravelling the relation between voice, the call of conscience, and their individuating impact on Dasein and the call to authenticity, Heidegger writes: "What does the conscience call to him to whom it appeals? Taken strictly, nothing. The call asserts nothing, gives no information about the world-events, has nothing to tell. Least of all does it try to set going a "soliloquy" in the Self to which it has appealed. "Nothing" gets called to this Self, but it has been summoned to itself-that is, to its ownmost potentiality-for Being. The tendency of the call is not such as to put up for "trial" the Self to which the appeal is made; but it calls Dasein forth (and "forward") into its ownmost possibilities, as a summons to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being-its-Self . . . Conscience discourses solely and constantly in the mode of keeping silent" (318). Elsewhere in a passage which is more ontologically inflected Heidegger observes: "The only one among aI1 entities man experiences, in being called by the voice of Being, the miracle of all miracles: that the existent is. The one who is called in his essence to the truth of Being is thus constantly tuned in an essential mode. [...] The originary thought is an echo of the inclination of being, in which the Unique glimmers and lets itself happen: that the existent is. This echo is the human response to the Word of the mute voice of being. The response of thought is the origin of human speech, which in the 6rstplace engenders language as the reverberation of the Word in words" (307, 310)

Pathos). What should be noted with regard to this idiosyncrasy of the cry is that, notwithstanding the inter-corporeal and intrinsically intermediary space that cry embodies or/and creates, no trace of simultaneity, coincidence, or symmetry between self and the other is discernible in it or in the relation formed by the issuing forth of it. And this confirms the chiasmatic, abject and hence, the ethical (the fact that the ethical trace is "registered" in the cry) status of the acousmatic cry. The irresolvable ambivalence which lies at the heart of Edward Munch's painting—"The Scream"—with certain qualifications, is comparable to the condition or status of the cry in *Gertrude*. In the painting, the uncanny source of the voice cannot be certainly determined as either internal to the agonized figure inhabiting the scene or the more macabre landscape surrounding it. Barker, by the same token, intimates the ontologically equivocal relation between Gertrude and the cry with the dash he inserts between Gertrude's name and the word "cry" in the title of the play: *Gertrude—The Cry* (a form of punctuation that, as Barker himself professes, rarely occurs in his writings).

The last characteristic that substantiates the cry's being acousmatic is the indeterminable cause of it. Although Gertrude certainly identifies the cause of the cry as betrayal (Gertrude: 'The cry's betrayal Claudius (Pause) /…Betrayal /…And it comes from nowhere else" (2002, 44) even this act of determination is shrouded in ambiguities. We are prompted to ask: betrayal of what; the answer to which conjures up a host of possibilities: betrayal of self, betrayal of the other, betrayal of love, betrayal of Law or the interdictions of the symbolic order and edicts of morality. In addition, the question that more persistently preoccupies us is that, if the cry reveals betrayal, why she has not made any cries while copulating with Albert, as she vehemently denies emitting cries then, in the act.

As I have adumbrated above, the causes and the conditions with which the occurrence of the cry is coincident are multiplicitous and diverse (including heteronomy, inter-corporeal proximity, transgressive eroticism, and sacrifice), an attribute which emanates from its being intimately bound up with four fundamental concerns of the play and characters: logos, eros, Thanatos and pathos (see 2002; 22, 32, 67, passim). Not rarely, however, the four motifs are irresolvably merged or imbricate. The first and the last scenes of the play paradigmatically illustrate the point at issue. In these scenes the circumstances underlying and triggering the cry emerge as a vortex-like fusion of transgressive eroticism, sacrificial death of the king, and a

crescendo craving for a heteronomous ontology, self-excendance, and a chiasmatic proximity. Elsewhere Claudius' expression of consternation also substantiates the issue at stake: "Her cries I thought peculiarly similar to those she utters in the act of love yet this was pain surely?" (2002, 62). Nevertheless, the affect and the gesture subtending almost all the preceding events and undertaking sis indeed, *sacrifice*; (of the self, the Other, and the restricted economy) and unobtrusively prevailing is the cry as the emblematic expression of *sacrifice as coup de don*—gift of aporetic death, love, or time (See Derrida 1979*;* also see Taylor 1987, 134-9).

One of the irrefutable evidences to this effect is that, on most occasions which it resonates, it is accompanied by or even coincides with an excessive corporeal expenditure and loss: outpouring or overflowing of a part of body or that of a bodily fluid such as blood, vomit, crying, convulsive menstrual flows, delirious and hysterical laughters, all illustrating the plethoric manner the subject (and its entrenched ego boundaries and solid folds of the self) are trespassed, violated, expelled, expanded; expressive of at once abject and sublime nature of such states: "MY WALLS WERE FALLING/ Yes / MY LIMBS CLAUDIUS MY HEAD / IN ALL DIRECTIONS / Yes /I DID NOT THINK / AT THE CRY'S END / I COULD BE STILL INTACT /Yes / CLAUDIUS" (Barker 2002, 71). Furthermore, if we subject the descriptive phrases that delineate Gertrude and Claudius in the midst of and in the aftermath of such moments, they are vividly reflective of the sheer magnitude and scale of the sacrifice they are affected and afflicted with. On the event of murdering Hamlet, the manner she is depicted, illustrates the intensity of her self-dispossession, dehiscence, and excendance: "Again her cry comes. *She is doubled*. Still Claudius observes her…. Only now, does Claudius go to Gertrude. He wraps her in an embrace of exquisite tenderness. They remain thus, *a trio of extinction*…" (2002, 78; my italics).

Conclusion

As the preceding analysis sought to disclose, the significance and corollaries of the cry cannot be restricted to the aesthetic dimensions of the play, but more prominently, they prove to encompass the ontological and ethical facets too. Consequently, the acousmaticity of the cry, as demonstrated, can be concluded to not only enunciate, but incarnate the thematics and dynamics of *Gertrude* and its characters in four distinct respects. Firstly, the aesthetic(formal, stylistic, and (re)presentational)

level; by incorporating the cry and vesting it in acousmaticity, as the most apposite and viable aesthetic vector of the motifs of the play, Barker's work transcends the dichotomy of text as the referent and text as the autonomous signifier, which represent realist and modernist approaches respectively. And thus, the text should be identified to lodge somewhere between and beyond modernist and postmodernist trends. This trajectory also depicts Barker's departure from modernism (Expressionism and Surrealism among its other strands) to postmodernism (in the sense propounded by Lyotard: as a critical and yet de-constructive moment in/of modernism) and beyond.

Secondly, the epistemological level, that is the level of knowledge and/or perception of the self, the Other and the world, and all three, in turn, with respect to the thematics of the play. More clearly, this level concerns the way the cry reflects the four fundamental preoccupations of the play (logos, thanatos, eros, and pathos) and complies with the mode of relationality between them (proximity and différance) as well as that of characters with them. Yet, it also concerns the impetus urging the characters to engage with foregoing thematic points, and adumbrates the kind of knowledge underlying the play.

As regards the two aforementioned levels, Jean-Luc Nancy's rigorous philosophical reflections on *listening* and its significant implications in relation to sense and subjectivity, along with his elaborations on the attributes of aurality in his book, *Listening*, can bring our hitherto disparately discussed points about the aesthetic and ethical ramifications of the cry's acousmaticity into an articulated and perspicuous focus. Accordingly, he juxtaposes the visual and the aural in a comparative analysis, underpinned with a critical view to the specular and ocularcentric essence of Western philosophical tradition, and presents an account of their distinctive features. Taking his hint variously from Lacan and Heidegger, Nancy identifies the visual as being "on the side of an imaginary capture (which does not imply that it is reduced to that)," while the sonorous is "on the side of a symbolic referral/renvoi (which does not imply that it exhausts its amplitude)" (2007, 10). Extending his argument to the question of nature and modality of (both subject-object and inter-subjective) relationality, Nancy characterizes the visual as "tendentially mimetic," and the sonorous as "tendentially methexic (that is, having to do with participation, sharing, or contagion)"

(2007, 10). Though, these two orders or tendencies, as he notes, are not mutually exclusive or incompatible and might intersect or overlap.

Predicated on a meticulous characterization of respective idiosyncrasies of the two sense modalities (the sonorous and the visual), he proceeds to elicit the epistemological, existential and ethical implications of the order or register of sonority/aurality. As Nancy argues, it is primarily aurality/sonority (over and above all other sensory modes), in general, and the act of "listening," in particular, that affords us insight into the (non)essence of the self. What is revealed is the primacy and primordiality of hetero-affection over auto-affection, or, for that matter, hetero-affective nature of auto-affection (see also Derrida 1973, 79-82). In *listening*, as Nancy explicitly states, in the state of self as aurality, the "self" is perceived to be "nothing [substantial, subsistent, or self-present] but precisely the resonance of a return [renuoi]" (2007, 12). Indeed, the aural self, given the inherent liminality of listening, involves being perpetually a self-in-crisis and being in an approach to the self (2007, 7-9). It, more strictly, entails a non-objectifying mode of interminable self-referral in which self-presence and self-identity are infinitely deferred. The sound of the sense (of the auditory/aural) reveals the "structure of the self" as being not only *acoustic* but, more crucially, *acousmatic*, that is, starkly marked by porosity, equivocity, irreducible duality and ex-centricity (8-13).The least repercussion of such a conceptualization is that it comes to the subversion of the essentialist ideas of the self (in all its chief manifestations, ranging from the Cartesian cogito, and the Kantian autonomous subjective identity, to Husserlian transcendental ego, or the phenomenological subject of intentionality and pure interiority (23).

This attitude, as it is evident, I must add, is highly akin to, and congruent with, the depictions of the self (and the way it features in relation to others)in *Gertrude*. Aurality, and as it is concretized in the cry, hints at what lies at the core of the play: the modality of the experience of the Impossibles and the presentation thereof, coupled with the question of relationality (and its modality: proximity); or more strictly, the self as relationality (primarily with singular alterity) in the mode of auto-affection as hetero-affection. Accordingly, for Nancy, to be listening and to exist as self-as-aurality is, thus, "to enter into tension and to be on the lookout for a relation to self: not, it should be underscored, a relationship to 'me'…or to the 'self' of the other…but to *the relationship in self*, so to speak, as it forms a 'self ' or a 'to itself' in general, and if something like

that ever does reach the end of its formation"(2007, 12; my italics). Thus, listening [as the register of the sonorous] "can and must appear to us not as a metaphor for access to self, but as the reality of this access" (12). And by this "reality," Nancy primarily intends an ambivalent, fundamentally différential reality; "a reality consequently indissociably 'mine' and 'other,' 'singular' and 'plural,' as much as it is 'material' and 'spiritual' and 'signifying' and 'a-signifying'" (12). Consequently, Barker's acute selection of the aural (the vocal-auditory) as the sensory mode and figural medium of the central concern of the play complies with the questions of (re)presentation, *relationality* as well as its equally determining modality at stake.

Thirdly, there is the ontological level, or more strictly, the being of self/subjectivity, alterity, and exteriority in *Gertrude*. Also at issue in this dimension are the factual conditions of existence and the meaning of being. And finally, and fourthly, there is the ethical plane, or the mode of relationality between self and the other, which is, as elaborated, proximal and chiasmatic. The cry, with its acousmatic nature, is apprehended as a heterogeneous affectivity, and, in turn, effects a heteronomous becoming in the autonomous self. The drastic alteration in Claudius' attitude towards Gertrude, from conceiving her as the embodiment of Eros/Thanatos, and, thus, as a means to an end (i.e., a counterforce for overcoming Logos) to the loved woman as the singular Other, runs parallel to and is reflected in the trajectory of the perception of (the essence of) the cry and its correlates, that is, from the Woman to the Trace, and viewed from another perspective, from the Woman to the Other. I argue that herein lies the ethical thrust of *Gertrude* and the sense and significance I have thus far attached to the term, ethics. This ethical turn evinces itself in the Claudius' transition from pursuing a metaphysics of desire (in the phallogocentric sense of the term) to an ethics of desire (in the sense elaborated by Levinas); and consequently, recognition of Gertrude as the Other, rather than the Woman.

To briefly elucidate the key concepts at issue above, as we know, the Woman, in Lacan's conception of the term, is tantamount to the Phallic Mother (the inversion of the Capitalized Phallus and epitomizing the masculine phantasy of absolute fulfilment, of the absolute autonomous identity of primary narcissism, and of metaphysical transcendence). Accordingly, as Lacan propounds, the Woman as one of the Names of the Father, the fantasmatic agency unbridled by the Law and possessing access to the Real, embodies the fullness of Desire (the object à) and the

infinite. In *Le Sinthome,* Lacan indicates that "*The* Woman in question is another name of God" (2005, 14).And elsewhere he explains: "the complete necessity of the human species[is] that there be an Other of the Other. It is this One that is usually called God, but of which analysis unveils that it is very simply The Woman" (Lacan 1973, 4, 48). Accordingly, the Woman is intimately linked with the Φ, which designates the phallic function/signifier (a quasi-transcendental signifier)and which Lacan calls the signifier of *jouissance*. In fact, this primordial signifier acts as the condition of possibility of all law or order (Lacan 1998, 103).As such, the Woman does exist as *not-all,* or, more lucidly, the Woman constitutes the exception to universal rule (Law of the phallic signifier/function),and, thereby, becomes the not-whole (not wholly Oedipalized or undergone castration) (Lacan 1982, 144). On this premise, the Woman is associated with the symptom (in the male as a knowledge whose cause or origin is in the Real) and the Real, where the real is a "beyond [au-dela] that makes itself heard in the dream" (Lacan 1981, 58-59).

Now, as regards the notion of the "trace," which Levinas associates with the notion of radical alterity (and also illeity), it becomes exceedingly important in Levinas' writings after *Totality and Infinity* (1979). In Levinas' conception of the term, the face (a fraught technical term in Levinas) of the Other—identified by him as the paradigmatic locus of ethical relationship—is figured above all as the trace, bearing the "hieroglyphs of an an-arche" (Levinas 1998, 11, 16, 24; Taylor 1987, 210). As he states: "in the trace of the other that a face shines; what is presented there is absolving itself from my life and visits me as already ab-solute" (1986, 359). Importantly, in the foregoing passage,"an-arche" designates the temporal mode of the trace (i.e., the immemorial),which, in turn, refers to the irrecuperable (to synchrony) and irrevocable temporality of the Other (that is, diachrony and anachrony), postulated as such to establish the Other and the relationship to him/her as untotalizable, unrepresentable, and unmediated by ideality and the universal. Levinas asserts: "The beyond from which the face comes signifies as a trace" (1986, 355). Further, the trace is, ontologically and epistemologically, inherently ambiguous; it pertains to the order of the enigma rather than phenomenon, and, thus, transpires as the anarchy or disturbance of the present order of being: "alterity occurs as a divergency and a past which no memory could resurrect as a present" (Levinas 1987, 68). Or, the trace is "incommensuarable with the present…over and beyond now, which this exteriority disturbs and obsesses" (Levinas 1998, 86). According to Levinas, the trace is inscribed within the self and invokes/evokes a profound, unmediated, and affective response in

the self, which acts akin to a traumatic trace or haemorrhage in subjective identity (1998, 141-5). In fact, the trace, as palpable in the ethical encounter with the face of the Other, is posited by Levinas to convey the absolute singularity, originary différance and infinite transcendence of the Other for the self: "a trace does not effect a relationship with what would be less than being, but *obliges* with regard to *the infinite*, the absolutely other" (1986, 357). Thus, Levinas, by articulating the mode, dynamics and the terms of the relation with alterity through the notion of the trace, intends to convey how both the Other and the relationship to him/her are beyond essence, positive presence, and, hence, preclude the possibility of cognitive comprehension(and reduction as the object of knowledge to the same), ontological totality and metaphysics of presence (see 1986, 358-9; see also 1998, 91, 93, 116, 118).Consequently, it is critical not to conflate the Other (associated with the trace)with the Woman (or the One) who, by definition, is the Other of the Other.

Thus, as it was expatiated above, the trace-like, aural, and acousmatic character of the cry coalesces with the perceptual trajectory it undergoes as well as the decisive existential-ethical transition it portends and provokes to accentuate the viability and aptness of the cry in relation to the dynamics, thematics of *Gertrude* in five principal respects involved: the non-representational nature of the transgressive instants it expresses; the figural medium devised to give expression to those instants; the "relational" nature of the cry and that of the experience it articulates or prompts; the mode of relationality between self and the Other (that is, chiasmatic and proximal); and, finally, the mode of subjectivity and being that the experience of Impossibles entails.

In conclusion, I will concentrate here on the corollaries of the points delineated in the course of my discussion. Premised on the foregoing discussion, it can patently be asserted that the cry reveals the nature and status of subjectivity and alterity in Barker's tragic Art of Theatre towards the later stages of its development (during the1990s and 2000s). In the light of the acousmaticity of the cry, *Gertrude* eschews identifying the female/feminine as the source, origin, or cause of the cry (as is rampantly the case in Surrealism and Expressionism (see Caws 1993, 17-30,50-64), in which case, the female would have been susceptible to becoming a phantasmatic spectacle/scene for the specular subject of scopophilic economy; a situational dynamic, which is blatantly symptomatic of and informed by ocularcentrism and phallogocentrism[67].18 In other terms, since in the case of the foregoing treatment and conception of the feminine, it is appropriated as the

[67] See Irigaray (1977, 64); Irigaray (1985, 27), and Irigaray (2000, 153-5); see also Ffrench (2007, 85-7, 151-5).

ground or fetishized site for transcendence, self-identity and unity by the masculine subject, if Barker's *Gertrude* had subscribed and conformed to this stance, it would no longer qualify as epitomizing a proximal-chiasmatic relation and logic. Nonetheless, as the play illustrates, each time the cry is issued, both Gertrude and Claudius are evoked and addressed by it, though they invoke it with equally passionate passivity (for the explanation of the term "passivity" (see Levinas 1998, 58, 69), and thereby they are both compelled to occupy an *accusative position*[68] rather than a nominal/nominative one. The accusative status of the individual in relation to the heteronomous, intercorporeal, and hetero-affective nature of the acousmatic cry (and its correlates) is explicitly reflected in the way it alters Claudius' attitude towards Gertrude; to wit, from an objectifying attitude (of deeming Gertrude as the subjective locus of the cry and desiring her) towards a conception of Gertrude as the Alterity and in a tenuous relation to it. This eventually leads to his apprehension of the entre-deux space and the irrevocable *différance* in relation to both of them and their relation to the cry. This trend culminates in his sacrificial exposure and receptivity to her and her aporetic love: supremely manifested in the gift of death in the final scene.

[68] Levinas deploys the term "accusative" to designate the mode of being of self in its responsivity and encounter with the other: "subjectivity is only this unlimited passivity of an accusative which does not issue out of a declension it would have undergone starting with the nominative…Everything is from the start in the nominative" (1998, 112). For further explanation regarding the meaning of the term in the Levinasian sense, see Levinas (1998).

CHAPTER THREE

Asyntactic Contact with Fleshless Words:

Con/tactile Aesth/Ethics in Howard Barker's *The Castle*

Asyntactic Contact with Fleshless Words:

Con/tactile Aesth/Ethics in Howard Barker's *The Castle*[69]

"The only difference between the love that flows through the envelope-walls of our skin or mucous fluids and the love which appropriates for itself in and by the same, lies in *the through* which allows each one their living becoming" (Irigaray 1992, 27).

"Neither knowledge nor power. In voluptuousity, the Other – the feminine – retires into its mystery. The relation with it is a relation with its absence" (Levinas, *TI*)

Introduction

Undoubtedly one of the most prominent and provocative of Howard Barker's plays is *The Castle*, which was written in 1983 (commissioned by the Oxford Playhouse Company). Along with two other plays - *Downchild* and *Crimes in Hot Countries*, with which it formed a trilogy - *The Castle* was first performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Barbican in 1985, when drama was widely deemed to be mainly concerned with a Reaganite intensification of the arms race and with oppositional feminist movements and values, outstanding among which was Greenham Common (see Lamb 94). Barker describes *The Castle* as depicting "appalling passions and bottomless despair" (*Style* 41); accordingly the aporias of corporeality (embodiment), sexual desire, and gender politics; the depiction of human mind and body in eventful moments of extremity, crisis and transgression; and, finally, the exposition of the metaphysical-theological, ethical, and psycho-somatically pathological underpinnings of human motives constitute three prevailing thematic strands of *The Castle*.

The text transpires as one of the most multivalent and challenging of Barker's oeuvre which weaves an essentially (inter)corporeal conception of the self (and relationality) into a densely packed ontological framework and ethical con/text of relations, subtended by a socio-symbolic

[69] See Alireza Fakhrkonandeh, "Asyntactic Contact with Fleshless Words" in JCDE 1:2, 2013.

arras of extensive scope yet tight integration. Thus *The Castle* (whose medieval landscape is intermittently traversed with anachronistic phenomena, instantiated both materially and linguistically[70]) strikes the reader/audience as not only demanding – given the range and complexity of emotions, images, and ideas pervading the play - but also as exhausting and convoluted - in terms of imaginative magnitude, radical temporal complications and dislocations, narrative structure, and playing/running time (two hours and fifty minutes). In this respect, *The Castle* solely bears comparison with plays such as *The Bite of the Night*, *Rome* and *The Ecstatic Bible*.

At various junctures in his *Arguments for a Theater*, Barker vehemently denigrates drama (and plays) that serve a certain function (be it ideological, socio-political, cultural-educational enlightenment) – a stance which he associates with Brecht, Chekhov, Shaw, and the whole host of contemporary Brechtians and Naturalists-Realists (*Arguments* 74, 77, 92, 94, 96, 104, 112, passim). In keen contrast to the aforementioned stance in theatre, Barker asserts that his plays are "without message" (because "[w]ho trusts the message-giver any more?") but not "without meaning"; he also denies that there are topical political messages in his plays. However, in the case of *The Castle*, Barker explicitly links the play to Greenham and the Cold War in two interviews he gave at the time. In an interview with Finlay Donesky, in *New Theatre Quarterly* (1986), Barker explains that *The Castle* "was very much my reaction to Greenham, but also a reaction to other playwrights' reactions". Barker expresses grievances and misgivings concerning the way his contemporaries (including David Edgar and Howard Brenton) invoked and deployed the Greenham event in two respects: their instrumental and ornamental use of it only to promote the contemporaneity of their work; secondly, their attempt to suggest Greenham as a solution (338). In another interview with Tony Dunn, in *Gambit* (1983), Barker described a new play that was inspired by the destructive power of science, presumably nuclear weapons. Here Barker expresses one of his main aims in writing *The Castle* as: "an attempt to discover some metaphorical basis for talking about scientific mayhem. That's what we have now, it's the crucial issue of our

[70] It is indeed *The Castle*'s (historically, psychologically and metaphysically) overdetermined language that makes a critic such as Rabey hear a proleptic echo of the paradoxical, double-edged logic informing Western politics – breeding paradoxical repercussions epitomized in 9/11 events (and the consequent "war on terror") - and a sentence in *The Castle* uttered by Krak: the castle "will create enemies where there are none" (see Rabey's "Raising Hell" in Gritzner and Rabey 18-19).

time. As I never write about a single issue I expect it will also involve sexual love and its redemptive power. I've said I'd write that kind of play before, but never have"[71].

The final product, that is, *The Castle* as a dramatic text, in several decisive respects (including gender politics and gender economy, the ethics of inter-subjective relationality, and the ontological-metaphysical dimensions) is far from being amenable to being reduced to an allegorical or metaphorical level. In keeping with the aesthetic precepts of Barker's *Theatre of* Catastrophe - one of whose main principles consists in pitting the "imaginative play" (of Theatre of Catastrophe) against the "researched play"[72] - such historical issues, however, are not only never directly invoked in *The Castle*, but their traces are so oblique and latent that if we disregard the extra-textual history and context of the play, they prove vestigial to the point of being indiscernible. Furthermore, as we will see below, Barker, in his approach to the issues at stake, refuses to restrict them to gender economy and gender politics (more accurately, refusing both an essentialist and analogously grounded feminist attitudes); in this regard, his stance can even be deduced to be implicitly critical and, in certain respects, starkly defiant of feminist positions, power relation and gender politics.

Predicated on the foregoing points, it is not tenable to conceive *The Castle* to serve even as a partial allegory for Greenham Common and the Cold War; rather, it presents an overdetermined, imaginative vision and recreation of history in which the moments of event, loss, rupture and indeterminacy are foregrounded, inviting the reader to interact with them imaginatively and speculatively. Barker articulates his stance in this regard thus: "[...] my history plays are imagined history. I don't do research, they are an amalgam of intuitions, and the absence or misuse of facts

[71] Here Barker expresses one of his main aims in writing *The Castle* as: "an attempt to discover some metaphorical basis for talking about scientific mayhem. That's what we have now, it's the crucial issue of our time. As I never write about a single issue I expect it will also involve sexual love and its redemptive power. I've said I'd write that kind of play before, but never have". Barker adds an important methodological-stylistic point: "I want to approach the issue of mayhem in science by showing the alienation of the spirit of inquiry from the needs of the community. The way in which the resources of human society are funneled into mechanics of destruction is a sickness without parallel in human history. But I don't want to write an antinuclear play set in a bunker. That's a genre I don't want to be a part of. My metaphor for all this will be a pseudo-historical one—the return of the remnants of the crusaders to an English village" (Interview 33–34).

[72] "But the theatre is not true, it is not a true action, its very power, its whole authority comes from the fact that it is not true, and the idea of accuracy, or reference to a source outside the theatre walls, is fatal to its particular unsettling and revolutionary power. The moment that an action on the stage asserts its veracity by reference to known and proven action elsewhere, theatre is overwhelmed by the world, the world reclaims it" (*Arguments* 73)

does not make them any the less historical" (Barker interview with Tony Dunn 34). Barker strenuously emphasizes his intention in incorporating historical and pseudo-historical incidents to be primarily an epistemological rather than a political one: "I use history not for nostalgia, but to hack away at comforting images of the past in order to evoke, or unlock, feelings about the present. I don't do this for a political purpose, I do it to subvert conventions of thought" (Ibid). On this premise, in Barker we witness the historical imagination and imaginative history (consonant with post-Structuralist and reminiscent of Romantic's attitude toward history, particularly Coleridge) doubling with two implications and corollaries: first, disrupting and subverting the legitimacy, veracity and authority of the history as narrated by the dominant discourse and informed by "grand narratives of knowledge" and "emancipation"; second, adding one's own view and disclosing the repressed or elided or ... little narratives or other versions (ontological)[73]. On account of this Barker's tragic aesthetics becomes politically significant even as it is not political.

Nevertheless, in *The Castle* Barker's chief means to evoke topical politics and contemporary issues (gender politics and nuclear crisis) - while also conveying his hyper-dialectical (negative-dialectical) vision of Anti-History and History[74] and instigating ruptures in narrative time - is *anachronism*. More specifically, *anachronism* figures in two principal manners in *The Castle*. One, there is a general use of anachronism, for instance in the language of the play which, given its mainly medieval context, is not archaic or medieval, but modern, though lush and poetic. In addition, not only are resonances of sexual and reproductive rights at issue, but Barker makes the ethical and political elements of these conflicts overt. Two, there are also three more specific moments of anachronism in the play. Firstly, there are Skinner's numerous prophetic comments about the future and her premonition about the youth in the park all having headphones in their ears and remaining oblivious to the oppressive treatment and repressed/effaced history of individual struggles carried out on that site: "This floor, laid over flowers we once lay on, this cruel floor will become the site of giggling picnics, clots of children wandering with music in their ears and not one will think, not one, A **Woman Writhed Here** Once" (236). Secondly, there is the scene in which the soldiers appear. The litany of the soldiers contains an intersection of several

[73] Barker himself observes, in reference to the entire trilogy of plays at the Pit, "In a very obvious sense, they are not historical plays at all, but fully contemporary. The language makes no concessions to quaintness; the social structures deny historicity; the ideologies are not subordinate to period either. They are defiantly unresearched" (qtd. in C. Davies).
[74] History in its common socio-symbolic sense.

historical ages – or as Rabey says "scrambled across and uniting various historical periods" (*Politics* 163) – in which they proceed from the archaic language of chivalric oath to the weapons of modern warfare.[75] And thirdly, there is, at the very conclusion of the play, the appearance some jets screeching overhead presaging the brooding gloom of an imminent war or catastrophe.

As regards the critical scholarship on *The Castle*, there have been two sustained engagements with the play, along with a couple of sporadic references to it by other critics in more general articles on Barker's work. Rabey's study of *The Castle* though sheds light on some of the tangled relations between body and power in the play (discussed along with *Women Beware Women*), it remains chiefly an expository account of the play, with a primary focus on its thematic and performance aspects. Nevertheless, with respect to certain issues such as "obsession" and the analysis of characters' existential and psychological features, there are significant points of contention that will be tackled in the course of the discussion below.

Lamb, in his extended analysis of the play (which constitutes the core section of his book on Barker) perceives "seduction" – as elaborated by Baudrillard in his book *Seduction* - to be at work on almost all levels in the play. Lamb maintains that seduction animates all the relations, including that between Ann and Stucley, between Stucley and his God, between Ann and Krak and between Skinner and other male characters. Lamb, in effect, goes as far as positing seduction as the governing *illogical logic* of not only *The Castle*, but of Barker's aesthetics and performance style/logic in general. As illuminating as Lamb's analysis is in unraveling certain aspects of *The Castle* – such as the dynamics of interaction between characters - (and Barker's work more generally), I would contend that seduction (in the specific sense elaborated by Baudrillard), at its best, might appear only as an occasional strategy or streak in characters and their action. Adopting Baudrillard and arguing for its applicability to Barker in an unqualified manner, as Lamb does, is riddled with numerous inadequacies[76] and far from tenable particularly in relation to Barker's later (more recent) work of the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s; approaching the plays based on Lamb's thesis of seduction prevents one from appreciating the (immanent) ethics (of the Other and the event)

[75]Richard Palmer clarifies two different facets of the deployment of anachronism in contemporary drama: "Anachronisms, which frequently appear in postmodern plays, can emphasize either continuity or disjointedness. In medieval drama with its sense of timelessness, anachronisms demonstrate unchangeableness; in postmodern history, they upset chronological order and the possibility of causation" (*The Contemporary British History Play* 177).

[76] For my extended critical engagement with Lamb's appropriation of Baudrillard's seduction in relation to Barker see my chapter on The Europeans.

and the aesthetics of self-fabrication and becoming-other. Further there are numerous modes of relationship and interaction and characters' motivations that cannot be accounted for in the light of his thesis on Barker.

In my study and analysis of *The Castle*, I have advanced a thesis for which I have devised the name "Contactile Aesthethics". It is a modality of a more general thesis (or, rather, a practice) of Aesthethics I have proposed elsewhere with regard to the prevailing and recurrent aesthetic and ethical patterns in the majority of Barker's middle and later plays. The "Contactile Aesthethics" thesis aims to pose the possibility of a proximal (and schizo-nomadic) mode of existence and ethical inter-subjective (or ethical, in a Derridean-Levinasian sense of relationship to the absolute Other) relation by disrupting the logic of phallogocentrism, using a heteronomous, (inter)corporeal attitude predicated on revised notions of the aesthetics of embodied self and ethics of the Other.

Initially, I will demonstrate how the male dominant discourse (as presented in *The Castle*) is a phallogocentric discourse premised on the pursuit of *ontology*, *identity* and *totality* (or authorit(y)arianism), the morality of which is wholly abstract, general, and universal, predicated upon solipsism, isomorphism, and sovereign autonomy[77]. Then, I will proceed to illustrate that this phallogocentric discourse owes its abiding dominance to the exclusion and abjection of *the proximal* - in the case of the play: the feminine - features on the one hand, and the body (in general, and female body in particular) on the other. Accordingly, the dominant discourse, as it is evident in *The Castle*, in order to cope with the crisis of the Other and to hold it at bay enforces a coercive-repressive strategy and consigns it to an external realm, as its "constitutive outside", or its unrepresentable other, at the tenuous borders of discourse (*Bodies* 8). Further, I will argue that even when such a discourse intends to make allowances for and include bodies, it relegates them to a process of phallomorphic "regulatory production" via which certain bodies that are incorporated and constructed come to be conferred with meaning and significance and some others

[77] This assumption with respect to the play is premised on the implicit and explicit conduct and statements made by different characters and the discourse they represent or show allegiance to, coalesced with their conceptions of self, morality and the conditions and implications of the relations with the Other which reveal can be recognized, as I will try to demonstrate, as principally partaking of Kantian and Hegelian doctrines. To provide a succinct sketch of the core concepts of Kantian ethics is based on two principal concepts: "categorical imperatives" and "maxims", the implementation of which entails a disembodied and disinterested adherence to universal rational sense of duty. The sole a priori for the administration of categorical imperative is a rational agency abstracted from its spatio-temporal specificities and corporeity: "three formulas of "autonomy, respect for the dignity of persons, and formula of legislation for a moral community (*FMM*, 402, 429, 436; see also)

excluded, deconstructed and abjected. This "constructedness" coalesced with performativity are/is pivotal to this study and as Judith Butler states, it is "as important to think about how and to what end bodies are constructed as it is to think about how and to what end they are not constructed" (1993, 16).

The second part is dedicated to the analysis of *The Castle* by the application of the thesis. The pivotal point in this section is the pursuit of the trajectory of phallogocentric rationality and morality throughout the play, the ambivalent apotheosis of which, as I have proposed, is Krak (in conjunction with Stucley) and his correlate: the castle. Contesting the previous critical readings of the play (see Ian Rabey 1989: 170; and Lamb 143-7) I have argued against Krak (or Ann) being a static character and demonstrated his being a profoundly dynamic subject in process/on trial (see Kristeva's RPL 18-23; passim) with a drastic existentio-ethical alteration at the end. In fact, this point starkly marks the juncture of the foregoing study and the present one. Accordingly, I will examine Krak's tension-ridden "hyper-dialectical" interplay with proximal (in the case of the play, also feminine) forces and the manner in which he undergoes an upheaval from a downright disregard of the Other[78] and an unflagging faith in the absolute righteousness of solipsistic reason to capitulation to a self-exposure and the essentiality of the apprehension of proximity/femininty[79]: heteronomy and the chiasmatic body. This is ensued by a gradual incorporation of feminine features into himself and the very structure of the castle running parallel with the establishment of a new quirk of Christian ethics – "the religion of Christ the erect" and "Christ the Lover" (grounded upon "body, blood and semen") by Stucley. This irrevocable declivity of the phallogocentric discourse culminates in their supersession of their (yet reformed and reformulated) feminine

[78] Here, (inter)corporeality and alterity as femininity.

[79] What should be noted, however, is that one of the distinct respects that distinguishes the concept of corporeality (or flesh) at stake here is its being fundamentally chiasmatic and proximal (attributes which in *The Castle* are particularly emblematized by the feminine - which, in turn, is not necessarily bound to the female, more strictly, not determined and informed by gender essentialism). Indeed, the very dynamics of the thesis is premised on the notion of femininity and not femaleness. It is crucial, then, to differentiate between the "feminine" and the "female". The *Feminine*, here, is a feature to be sought, incorporated, contracted, created, and enacted, not to be born with or to own exclusively owing to one's sex. Feminine designates quirks such as being an in(ter)corporative corporeality, indeterminable and indefinite (non-monological, non-dialectical), atopic, fluid, and even dissimulatory; whereas the "Female" adverts to a congenital, essentially biological, and innate attribute: one's sex apparent in one's physical appearance. Derrida's argument clarifies the distinction: "That which will not be pinned down by truth is, in truth- feminine. This should not however be mistaken for a woman's femininity, for female sexuality, or for any other essentializing fetishes which might tantalize the dogmatic philosopher, the impotent artist or the inexperienced seducer who has not yet escaped his foolish hopes for capture" (1979, 55). Indeed, the woman or feminine here designates a "name for the non-truth of truth".

correlate, epitomized in Krak's conversion, and the failed attempt at the establishment of a new heterodox religious cult: “Holy Congregation of the Wise Womb” which is intended to originate from exclusively female features. As we will witness, this gesturing towards the establishment of a new strand of quasi-feminine institutional authority, however, due to the proximal and heteronomous logic which has been assumed and is adhered to by Krak and partially Skinner, collapses as soon as it is founded.

Thus, crucial to the dynamics of this play by Barker (and accordingly this analysis) is that the play (along with Ann) – and not the characters such as Skinner, Stucley and early Krak - eschews binary or dialectical logic of male-female, masculine-feminine, or, in brief, the logic of identity and opposition. Instead, it moves towards a logic of proximity, which is grounded on inter-corporeal exposure, contamination, and différance. And open-endedness of the play demonstrates this dynamics and/or logic. My argument is that proximity - one of the correlates of which in the play is “femininity” (as a mode of sensibility), and not “female” or “feminism[80] and its correlative gender politics and economy – both as a mode of relationality and that of corporeal existence - forms the fulcrum of the play and provide the impetus for the dynamics of the play. As such, three decisive moments that starkly mark the turning points of this feminine-triggered trend in the play can be discerned and distinguished as follows: the erection and subsequently, the re-configuration of the castle, the re-writing of the Bible, and, finally, the eventful moment of proximity between Ann and Krak (culminating in Krak’s conversion into the logic of heteronomy and proximity). This course comprises the re-inscription and re-vision of a macropolitics of symbolic economy (and ethics of totality-autonomy) in terms of the micropolitics of libidinal economy (and ethics of infinity-heteronomy) and I would argue Ann incarnates this ethics of proximity [(inter)corporeality], infinity and alterity.

The eventuation of the moment of contactile aesthethics (the proximal relationship between Ann and Krak), in turn, is grounded on two crucial conditions: Krak’s and Ann’s respective existential-ethical and discursive positions and dispositions. This entails the delineation of Ann’s unique status and its cumulatively drastic consequences in the play. I would argue that Ann’s singular status arises on the one hand, from her mode of ethical existence and on the other hand, from her

[80] Not necessarily bound to the female body yet in the play in conjunction with the female body.

mode of desire. As will be demonstrated, Ann's mode of existence is non-ontological[81], inter-corporeal and proximal, traits not least attributable to her constant exposure and pregnancy both literally and figurally. Ann's mode of desire, as will be demonstrated, is schizo-nomadic and characterized by fluidity, productivity, heteronomy and deterritorialization

Accordingly, in addition to the pursuit of the trajectory of phallogocentric discourse through the foregoing three cataclysmic moments, I will seek to demonstrate diverse dimensions of the body (transcendental body/desire, body politic, and phenomenal-libidinal body) and various problematic ways in which it operates in *The Castle* and to critically analyze it from two standpoints: discursive (ideological) and ethical-ontological. I shall contend that the body features as the very provocative cause for the re-thinking of the relation between the transcendental and the sensible.

The Corpus of the Castle Un/Done

The Castle depicts the return of Stucley - along with his retinue (Batter) and an Arab captive who is an architect (Krak) - having spent seven years in the Crusades, to find, to his distress and stupefaction, that all the symbols and values of the formerly entrenched order and authority have been overthrown and, instead, a gynaecentric discourse of communal freedom, which to them appears or strikes as disorder. Men, on their very homecoming, are denied the "domesticity, recognition and familiarity" (Barker 2005: 7) indispensable to the reinstatement of their authority and to securing their former identity. Consequently they embark on to the restoration of the phallocratic discourse by taking exhaustive and all-encompassing disciplinary measures in this regard, an enterprise which instigates the repercussive tensions and conflicts permeating the whole play, and with which we will deal below.

The very outset of the play portrays a dormant yet cumulatively emergent tension, reflected in the climatic commotion, which prefigures and sets into motion the dynamics of the play. We catch a glimpse of two men on a hill, caught in curtains of rain and heavily wrapped up, staring into a valley (Barker 199); a scene that presages an already smoldering tug between the male and

[81] In the sense attributed to it by Levinas: totality of ontology as opposed to the infinity of alterity.

the female. Apparent in the opening scene description is *the gaze*; and this sheds light on a salient strain in Krak - as the epitome of male rationality and, by extension, symptomatic of the logic of the phallogocentric discourse. As will be developed below, the notion of reason's speculation is linked with masculine specularization and visual mastery. When Krak is asked what he is doing, he bluntly responds: "looking". He goes on staring until some moments later Stucley asks him about the target of his gaze, and he remarks: "I am looking at this hill, which is an arc of pure limestone" (200). Relatedly, on their first confrontation, when Ann wonders what Krak is doing there, he says: "Looking. In so far as the mist permits" (201). This is apparently a gaze of some substantial pregnation and coalesced with Krak's reticence, indicates a remarkable element and suspension in the narrative and interactive dynamics of the scene.

Later, when Stucley is apprised of the consequences of Krak's contemplations - the scheme for the castle - the moment is presented in a very resonant fashion: "Stucley's long stare is interrupted by a racket of construction as a massive framework for a spandrel descends slowly to the floor" (213). The grave repercussions that reverberate throughout the play testify to the extent this gaze should be conceived not as a neutral or innocuous look, but as charged, loaded and symptomatic (of *the specular logic of phallogocentric discourse*). The underlying issue at stake is the invariable link between reason's speculation and masculine specularization which requires/demands further investigation (see Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 11-127, 111-112, 133-4; see also Moi 134). A cogent testimony to the act of speculation as tantamount to a gesture of phallic mastery can be detected in Stucley's wry remark, when finding Krak immersed in reflecting on un-specularizable and immeasurable character of female genitalia: "... all the madness in the immaculately ordered words ... in the clean drawings ... all the temper in the perfect curve ... (He pretends to flinch.) Mind your faces! … Intellectual bursts! … Tumescent as the dick which splits, splashing the ceiling red with sheer barminess…!" (243).

In fact, the visual and rational assaults are coextensive and coexistent. Krak's speculative forays into the hill, valley and female genitalia are a much more effectual form of virile violence than Stucley's bungled assail on Cant on their arrival. It perforates the limestone analytically and inflicts a geometrical gash - the castle - on it. It is this latent strain that Ann "instinctively" detects and tries to flout by asserting herself, while her remarks adumbrate the proximity of the hill and female body and in the meantime hint at the eventfulness of the encounter: "What are you doing on my

hill? ... Get off my hill. (He starts to go.) **This was an ordinary afternoon and now you're here!**" (202). Such a speculative representation claims to be faithfully and immediately mimetic while in effect it transpires as assimilative, manipulative and inherently inclined towards the idealistic reproduction of identity and symmetry. This isomorphic mirror, nonetheless, is not left unscathed in the play and is dealt with in two contrary manners. The two stances assumed towards it are radically different: (binary) opposition and (proximal) relation, respectively adopted by Skinner and Ann though not exclusively and not devoid of implications. In the former standpoint the indicated mirror is dashed and abolished; the approach implemented by the latter is that of contact and contamination. The former strategy is discernible in the exhaustive eradication of the faintest vestige of phallogocentric discourse carried out after the departure of the males for the crusades evident initially in the play but such a stance as the course of the play illustrates proves to be futile and solely conducive to re-instatement of the patriarchal paradigm.

Correspondingly, *The Castle*, prima facie, opens unto antithetical positions, indicative of the dichotomous dynamics of stereotypically Freudian imagery and specular identity: two male individuals standing erect with a typically masculine posture on the verge of a valley. Nevertheless, such a setting should not distract us from noticing a much more fluid, volatile, and fugitive element in the scene: the rain. Indeed, the analogue of the feminine figure of the play proves to be not the amorphousness of the traditional valley figure, but the *anamorphosis* of the unobtrusive rain, the seductive difference of which displaces not only the specular identity/mastery but also this very dichotomy. Ann's explicit association of rain and femininity coupled with the immediate juxtaposition of land and subjectivity here corroborates the connection between the two. A few moments later, Ann, to extenuate the viability of his assertion invokes the seductive association of female body and the hill as both being naturally vested with an ostensibly opacity and beguiling gauze: "[the hill] Drapes itself in a fine drench, not liking to be spied on. A woman, this country…" (201). In the play, the sheets of rain with their fluid folds and distorting involutions approximate the function of *speculum*.[82] It is important to note that it is not just the fact that the chaotic element

[82] Here Irigaray's work will help elucidate this issue more fully. To debunk and dismantle such a domineering, narcissistic/isomorphic logic, Irigaray, however, contends that the aforesaid speculative mirror with its flat and faithfully mimetic surface is not necessarily required to be shattered but to be supplanted by a female/feminine version of fluid logic; a more benign, more fluid mirror - a concave mirror or speculum (see *This Sex* 156, 76-8, also see *Speculum* 144, 149). Speculum counters and parries male "hysteroscopic desire" (Jay 534) as it always displays a warped, labyrinthine and distorted reflection. It is this excess of contortion in reflection which infuses the rift and rupture in the representational mirror of masculine discourse and must be ab-used and exploited by women to countervail the frigid logic of binarism:

is added or appended to the male-female anatomy or sensibility but that the very essence of perceptual relation is informed by and partakes of a tactile or haptic logic, fostering a multivalent space of non-violent intimacy. Probably the most concrete consequence of such seductive pursuit of a chiasmatic logic of relation is *the castle* itself as it eventually features: heterogeneous, superimposed (simultaneously feminine and masculine), and manifold.

A little later we come to one of the principal passages in the play which sheds light on many latent aspects of it and succinctly sketches the process of a de-establishment and re-establishment. It delineates, retrospectively, the drastic alterations wrought by women in the absence of men and the phallogocentric discourse; on the other hand, it concisely captures the stakes of the feminine resistance movement led by Skinner. Skinner, in her argument with Ann, recounts the way they abolished the trinity or the triadic fundaments of male dominant discourse: "First there was the bailiff, and we broke the bailiff. And there was God, and we broke God. And lastly, there was Cock, and we broke that too. Freed the ground, freed religion, freed the body" (203). Here, she refers to the way various permutations of logos-/truth-based male dominant discourse have been , destabilized, divested of their ideological appurtenances and apparatuses, and ultimately deposed in every respect; in socio-political field by "breaking the bailiff"- representative of exploitative masculine discourse: "Feudalism"; in the ontological-moral arena by dethroning the paramount father figure with its apparently neutral and metaphysical status – "God"; and lastly, in psycho-sexual sphere by overthrowing the phallus. So, as such, they wipe the land and their mind off the very least trace of masculinity.

The critical point that Skinner foregrounds in her account of the foregone recasting is that the emancipation of the body transpires as the corollary of such a radical dismantling of the patriarchal paradigm. No less crucial is that the emancipation of the land and female body have been pursued and implemented concurrently with the *emancipation of language*. Nailer's remarks when he is confessing to his collusions in the abolition of masculine authority and sovereignty in the absence of the lord, Stucley, attest to the point at issue: "… and we threw the fences down and made a bad

"The woman is always already in a state of anamorphosis, in which the figure becomes fuzzy" (*Speculum* 230). As such, Irigaray poses the possibility of a more tactile and chiasmatic perception and relation than those involved/underpinning specular vision, as Martin Jay cogently states: "Autoaffection … not auto-representation is the mark of female sexuality" (535; see also *This Sex* 26).

word of fence, we called fence blasphemy, the only word deemed so, all the rest we freed, the words for women's and men's parts we liberated-" (212).

Women do not remain content with merely the abolition of the emblems of masculine discourse and the restoration of hitherto-repressed femininity, but insist on carrying transgression to its limit by naming and declaring, or more strictly, giving "linguistic" expression to, femininity and female carnal-sexual traits. In keeping with the drastic course taken, Skinner accentuates the manner in which the female body had been abjected[83] by the male dominant discourse; she asserts: "[We] FOUND CUNT BEAUTIFUL that we had hidden and suffered shame for, its lovely *shapelessness*, its colour all miraculous, what they had made dirty or worshipped out of ignorance" (203). Her contention subversively reformulates the definitions of beauty and form. This passage immediately evokes Irigaray's trenchant critique of Lacanian descriptive account of female genitalia (exemplifying a long-standing theologico-philosophical tradition) as a hole, crack, lacuna, a-morph and Irigaray's replacement of tactility for visibility as the more authentic and true criterion for female sexual experience, as indicated above. The enterprise undertaken by women here can be construed as the realization of Irigaray's injunction that "a woman must discover and display her own morphology to succeed in creating with the primary matter that she is" ('A Natal Lacuna', 1994:12) deemed pivotal for the attainment of socio-symbolic and existentio-ethical authenticity.[84]

Accordingly, a deep distrust of words and their application (as already inscribed by phallogocentric discourse or due to recognition of a discrepancy between symbolic speech/signification and their semiotic or corporeal expression) can be recognized in the attitude

[83] In the sense of being excluded, defiled, tabooed or fetishized; for further discussion see Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* (3-25).

[84] To Irigaray, experiencing the body in all its materiality constitutes the precondition for countering the exclusion of the feminine from a masculine Symbolic. Accordingly she differentiates between anatomy and morphology ("Women's Exile", 64). According to Irigaray achieving an ethics of sexual difference is inextricable from an exploration of a woman's morphology. She contends that it is through the recovery of her imaginary corporeal morphology that woman is able to constitute her subjective difference, for as long as the repressed or the unconscious lies sedimented and covert within her, woman will be a place to be occupied rather than occupying a place of her own in socio-symbolic order: "Woman is not represented in the Symbolic Order because it is predicated on the morphology of the masculine. Woman has no forms which she can inhabit" (63). This passage immediately evokes Irigaray's trenchant critique of Lacanian descriptive account of female genitalia as a hole, crack, lacuna, a-morph and Irigaray's replacement of tactility for visibility as the more authentic criterion for female sexual experience, as indicated above. To her, a woman must not sever herself from the *hulè* (primary matter or morphology) that she is, nor leave it to maternity, but to give form to it in a radically creative manner (see "A Natal Lacuna" 12)..

of women (but not necessarily) to language which is evidently observable in the conversation between Ann and Skinner. Skinner importunes Ann for a forthright verbal affirmation of their mutual love to dispel her qualms, yet Ann declines, saying: “I don't declare my feelings … Can't be forever declaring feelings, you declare yours, over and over, but -” (218); because “I don't see that I need, do I, need to -”. And a little further on in response to Skinner’s unrelenting insistence, she pinpoints the two tacit significatory modes of communication: “I am not forthcoming with these statements you require, you have to trust- … Signs, more.” (218).

Here Ann implies a differentiation between sign (as a more embodied speech or a more bodily-semiotic language) and symbol (as conventional symbolic language); she is cognizant of verbal ruses of the symbolic language and manipulative use of terms as an instrument of seeking domination, fallacious representation and endowing an already encoded and invested identity. Thus, throughout the play she displays a conspicuous tendency to create and enact a language much more derived from (inter)corporeal sensibility, bodily affects and material flows and its disruptive forces, sensations. Such a movement undertaken by Ann, receives theoretical articulation in Irigaray’s injunction to women to explore, recognize and devise a specifically female language(s) corresponding to their sensibility, corporeal mode of being/becoming and patterns of desire in order to get released from the grip of mimeticism and isomorphism: “If we don't invent a language, if we don't find our body's language, it will have too few gestures to accompany our story. We shall tire of the same ones, and leave our desires unexpressed, unrealized, we shall fall back upon the words of men we shall remain paralyzed. Deprived of our movements” (*SO* 1985, 214)

Finally, in accordance with the logic of proximity subtending the whole play, both Ann and Skinner (though in the case of the latter deeply equivocally) are depicted in terms of, and associated with fluids and non-dualism. Skinner’s remonstration manifestly demonstrates her repudiation of a binary logic and an attestation to the permeation of the whole life with love: “They talk of a love-life, don't they? Do you know the phrase ‘love-life’, as if this thing ran under or beside, as if you stepped from one life to the other, banality to love, love to banality. No, love is in the cooking and the washing and the milking no matter what the colour of love stains everything, …” (219). Skinner, however, symptomatically maintains and perpetuates the discourse of opposition, which is premised on natural-feminine essentialism and idealism, rather than attempting to move towards

a différance/proximity-oriented approach. This predilection becomes apparent when she does not waver to align herself with men in her later identification with the castle. When in her obsessive concern with Ann, she says: “and actually I could eat yours, I could-”, she heightens her affinity with the male in this regard. Nevertheless, the fact remains that towards the end of the play she achieves a more nuanced and tempered (less essentialist and idealist) stance, though the aforementioned predilection faintly persists.

Stucley’s Catastrophe and Ann’s Anastrophe

At the end of the first scene Krak’s abrupt appearance brings a breach in the dialogue between Ann and Skinner. The encounter is very tense and precarious, in which the contingency of truth and selfhood as well as the immanent provisionalness of values blindingly dawn on Stucley’s intransigent (metaphysical and spiritual) idealism (see 204-5). One of the crucial points that arises in the midst of their conversation is "the question of identity" in terms of "the aesthetics of self". Ann, true to her fluid character, asserts that she has changed, yet Stucley yearns for the “lie of innocence, stability, and sameness”. Ann’s remark corroborates the point: “Thinner but the same. For all the marching and stabbing. Whereas quietly, here I have” (8).

In keeping with what was expounded about the body of woman in patriarchal paradigm, when Stucley arrives, he is holding in his hand a white garment, and aspires to seeing Ann in it (204). Indeed such a gesture is symptomatic and redolent. This apparel can be considered as representing the conventionally ideological cast which phallogocentric discourse attempts to impose on the body . The veil emblematizes the purity, neutrality and abstraction with which women are invested and unveils the pervasive ideological practices and power relations which under the guise of transcendental and spiritual self-containment foist normativity upon woman and domesticate, fetishize, or annihilate the excess and alterity of the female, with the tacit tripartite grid (mother-wife-child) projected on the woman and characteristic of such a discourse (see Kristeva “Stabat Mater” 163-6) is disclosed most egregiously when he stammers: “Yes, I was your child, **wasn't I?** (Pause. He suddenly weeps. She watches him, then goes to him. He embraces her, then thrusts her away.) **Penitence for** adultery!” (208).

In the phallogocentric discourse to which Stucley adheres, the body is at best idolized and hence idealized in the metaphysical language. The least distorting impact of such an apparatus, or framework, is that it divests the body of its very immediacy, materiality, and vitality and elicits its excess - in the form of vitality and disruptive desire(ability) - by nominating and normalizing it. Such a subtle mechanism has perceptively been exposed by Levinas: "To idealize is to turn ethics into politics" (*TI* 216-7). Similarly, Irigaray's description of a similar garment in her "Fecundity of the Caress" has an elucidating bearing on the confining and even effacing nature of such clothing: "a garment that first and foremost paralyzes the other's movement. Protecting it like the shield of the hero who defends the loved one from the conquest of some rival" (239). And this erosive/cannibalistic imagery evokes and is testified to by Skinner's beckoning to the way men commodify and reify female body: "We do not make a thing of flesh, do we, the love of women is more - they could eat flesh from off your body, we - no" (218).

At a second similar effort, Stucley endeavors to enframe and re-position her (and to get more firmly enframed and re-positioned himself) within the egocentric grid and phallogocentric paradigm by entreating her to embroider his image: "Very devout picture … make a tapestry why don't you?" (205). Such an appeal is vital to his sense of sovereign self and pursuit of transcendence and reveals his aspiration to feel hypostatized and infinitized in an act of double reflection via being re-presented by her hands/eyes. Such a transcendental movement to reach sublimity and stability, as Irigaray argues, is achieved at the cost of appropriation and coagulation of the fluidity and multiplicity of the feminine. She in her sweeping and deconstructive survey of philosophical as well as theological traditions, contends that notwithstanding all efforts made for decentering the subject in philosophical, psychoanalytical and theological discourse, the autonomous specular subject occupies the very hub of it. To substantiate her claim, Irigaray proposes two key terms: "Ex-stasis", attributed to the masculine, and "Copula", associated with the feminine. Ex-stasis which comprises two phonemes ex- and -stasis and means to stand outside oneself, to feel ecstatic, exhilarated or beside oneself, conceptually has been derived from medieval idealism: "It is a mystical state in which two lovers achieve a union of their souls by discarding corporeal desire" (*TS* 153-5): the Absolute Transcendence.[85]

[85] In this sense, if we extend the metaphor, subject achieves its autonomy by refuting the Other, the body, and their elemental involvement in its formation. Thus, although this "masculine ex-stasis", enacted both at a transcendent

Thwarted in his transcendental and pseudo-spiritual ambitions, as Stucley's anguish persists, he appears to be entirely inclined to acquiesce to anything provided that Ann still loves him and assures him of her/his identity and stability of the conditions. She does waver to inform him that she has not kept her fidelity to him. Thus, there comes another moment of catastrophe to the fore; the stage directions are eloquently expressive: "He is suspended between hysteria and disbelief" (206) to be followed by utter hysteria and later dementia. Abruptly, in a moment of blinding epiphany, all his former experiences are revealed to him in a new, shattering light: "And I have just fought the Holy War on his behalf! Oh, Lord and Master of Cruelty, who has no shred of mercy for thy servants, I worship thee!" (207). His experience is invariably translated into onto-theological terms coalesced with his comprehensive revaluation of his former values primarily bearing drastic ontological and discursive consequences. Indeed, the excruciating inconsistency or logical contradiction he suffers is construed not in terms of chance or natural causality (see Trotter 27-31) by him but as doomed by an insane system-maker: "what human torturer, what miserable nail-wrenching amateur in pain could pit his malevolence against the celestial wit and come out on top" (206). And subsequently he advances his radically revised conception of ontology and theology which is equally totalitarian and : "I offer you my version, you hark to my theology – he really is the most THOROUGHGOING OF ALL DEITIES, no wonder we all bow down to him his grasp of pain and pressure is so exquisite and all-comprehending…" (206-7).

Stucley, in giving vent to his frustrated beliefs and desires and in retaliation for his *detumescence* and sterility, orders the construction of the castle- the ostensibly and purportedly phallic symbol - on the hill: but as we will realize later, this symbol is perverted into a hybrid and indefinite figure of which one of the prominent facets will be the incarnation of feminine fluidity and multiplicity. Furthermore, this immediate transference/link and inextricable connection between morality (existential), ontology and ideology in Stucley and his inexorable urge to resolve the least point of contradiction so as render this tripartite unit as monolithic and homogeneous as possible is pivotal to the understanding of his character.

Now, based on the foregoing lines of argument and contours of characters what transpires more prominently and continues to pervade the play is the ethics adhered to by Stucley and the

ontological and the copulative linguistic level, stems from and is sustained by the ancillary operation of copula, yet it is never acknowledged and the movement is always an appropriative and exclusionary one (Walter 112-16).

early Krak, who early in the play despite working at odds with one another yet share the same logic of relation and form of reasoning. Accordingly, if we are to characterize Stucley and Krak each with two distinctive attributes we can respectively mention: "ontology and totalization" and "reflection (representation) and comprehension (or re-cognition)". Two crucial points, nonetheless, should be born in mind in this regard. First, these two categories are intricately intermeshed and complicitous; and second, each in its own turn prevents both persons from experiencing an authentic ethical relation with the Other. Reflection and (re)cognition as pursued in ethical relation (to alterity) are invariably conducive to totalization and metaphysics of presence; similarly, ontology and totalization tend towards solipsism and isomorphism; since both are predicated on, pursue and perpetuate knowledge and being rather than proximity and becoming (see *TI* 183). To advance towards the other on the basis of what is deemed to be prior knowledge is to have neutralized an exterior complexity and liberty that is antecedent to one's knowledge. As Levinas explains, by the word comprehension "we understand the fact of taking [*prendre*] and of comprehending [*comprendre*], that is, the fact of englobing, of appropriating" (*TI* 70). This predilection is reflected in the design Stucley demands for the construction of castle which is patently totalitarian and authoritarian and in his enforcement of exhaustive transparency and confession.

Thus the ethical behest with which both Stucley and early Krak comply is the ethics of totality, whereas Ann's, in an incisive contrast, is an ethics of infinity, as I will demonstrate in detail below. Levinas understands this infinity, in the Cartesian sense, as always overflowing the thought that thinks it (see *TI* 62), and Krak, as we will see later, is the foremost target and yet embodiment of it as he is the only person in the play who accedes (through Ann's provocations) to this apprehension. Ann overflows all ideas they have of her and all the terms – being, essence, identity, principle, the same – in which they would seek to encompass her, and the consequence is shame; shame at the sheer contingency or radical smallness of the ideas in question. We can conclude that, in Barker (as will be substantiated more fully towards the end of the play too) the ethical relation, then, is a relation to infinity which exceeds any representation of it, in the faltering or failing or 'ruin' of representation (see also *EDE* 125-136).

Now, by the same token, such constitution of identity, ontology and morality fosters its correspondent existential modes of temporality and temporal experience. This experience of time

indelibly informs the characters' attitudes and the course of action adopted by both Krak and Stucley; one of the ramification of which is diminishing the possibility of authentic ethical experience and a dynamic aesthetics of the self.

Irigaray in *To Speak Is Never Neutral* proposes an antithetical characterization of temporal (linguistic) subjectivity premised on the question of gender/sexuality (2002, 3), which can be elucidating to the dynamics of characters and thematics of the play at issue here. These two modes, namely, are *catastrophic* and *anastrophic*, respectively associated with male and female modes of temporal experience. In fact, she advances the latter mode as a remedial measure for and a trenchant critique of, contemporary culture's incremental inclination towards "socio-cultural entropy" - which as she contends - marks the male "form-giving" (2002: 3) enterprise as an irremediable impasse; a critique which is also conspicuously reflective of the state dominant in *The Castle*. Irigaray derives these two modes from two radically different discursive practices in the ancient Greeks; and accordingly, defines "anastrophe" as a rhetorical tactic, governing a grammatical inversion that mainly involves a temporal reversal. On the contrary, male "catastrophic" time is characterized by the predetermined course leading to the temporal finality, and beholden to the "law of genre" (Goldberg: 121), the denouement of a dramatic form. As such, "anastrophe" involves a repetition with a subversive difference, opens up an indefinite future horizon and includes some sort of turn or retrieval of beginnings, resulting in "turning in a cycle that never resolves in sameness," (Irigaray 1993: 195). In contrast, "catastrophe" signifies a point of no return, or a movement toward endings (*SO* 10). In short, female anastrophe is time as transposition and transformation whereas the male trajectory culminates in the inevitable climax of its own preordination.

The first point of distinction between the philosophical scaffold delineated above in relation to the play is that, these two forms of temporal being as depicted in the play are not necessarily bound up with the gender of the characters but with their ethico-existential stances; and this idiosyncrasy accentuates the way play defies gender-bound grids of reading and conforms to the pervasive logic of proximity which hovers in the interstices, faultlines and edges of the two adversely dualistic logics dominant in the play. At the pole of catastrophic temporal perception we can identify Stucley, early Krak and (ambiguously) Skinner and at the other pole stands Ann whose

time is the unfolding of immanent infinitude, whom the later Krak joins towards the end of the play, though transfigured and transposed through Ann herself.

Both Stucley and Krak can be recognized as living times driven by catastrophe, oriented towards demise and eradication. Even a cursory glance at Krak's reformulation of onto-theology suffices to infer to what extent his world is replete with imminent catastrophe and cataclysm as well as being propelled with unceasing non-synthetic tug and tension with a deranged God. While Krak pursues the concretization of catastrophe directly and volitionally, Stucley sees himself as the victim of a trend predestined by a ubiquitous, omnipotent and atrocious God; obliquely provoking and courting catastrophe to outstrip an ingeniously malicious God ending up in a self-defeating manner overshooting himself in self-loss. This unrelenting preoccupation with death and disaster, and the consequent declivity are not necessarily triggered by, and not confined to, the period subsequent to his encounter with Ann, but seem to inhere in his viewpoint; when she apprises him of her promiscuity he unwittingly professes: "… [God] chooses to hamstring me not by your death - that I had always reckoned possible, that I expected hourly to be splashed in my face" (206). In addition, Stucley, from the moment he embarks on erecting the castle, is ineluctably set on a catastrophe-ridden path, as this castle is not only devised to rout both transcendental and immanent adversaries but because the castle by definition "will make enemies where there are none … It makes war necessary" (213). The culmination of this exceedingly paranoid-fascist path of foreclosure finds its most blatant expression in this declaration: "They are building a castle over the hill and it's bigger than this … Given God is now a lunatic, I think, sadly, we are near to the Apocalypse" (236). To believe in such a predetermined conception of time and space is to lead an irrevocably claustrophobic, paranoid and catastrophic life within an ontological totality.

Although Krak feigns to act as an adept architect with a compliant phlegmatic demeanor, yet in effect, he is the "bitten old survivor of the slaughter" and "grandfather of slain children" (232). As such, as Ann acutely discerns, he is invariably impelled by death principle: "aping the adviser, aping the confidant … but actually, I do know … you want us dead. And not dead simply, but torn, parted, spiked… limbs between the acorns, a real rucking of the favored landscape" (232). Thus Krak's oscillation between a fixation on the "never more" of his massacred family and an obsession with the realization of the "not yet" of his retaliation, makes him reside in an interminable limbo of a (n)ever-present impending doom and inhabit a foreclosed ontology.

Ann's Mode of Relationality, Desire, and Language

Barker prefaces the play with the aphorism "What is Politics, but the absence of Desire…?" As it is discernible both in the foregoing statement and in the course of the play, desire pervades the play and in effect (in conjunction with intercorporeal relation) constitutes its impetus. Premised on the hints and evidences derived from the play concerning the way desire and is dimensions and implications are treated in *The Castle*, I suggest that here Barker's conception of desire evinces striking affinities with, and can be amply illuminated by, the schizo-nomadic mode of desire (as explicated by Deleuze and Guattari); designating a dynamics of alterity, alteration, deterritorialization and exposure. This clue is conducive to the dialectic of desire in the play which plays a pivotal role in revealing the existential and ethical stance and disposition of characters. In the ensuing section, I will seek to substantiate my proposition that Ann incarnates and enacts a schizo-nomadic mode of desire which is born out in her mode of relating to the Other, her treatment of the strictures of the symbolic discourse (here, phallogocentric paradigm), and her approach to language.

A fundamentally (inter)corporeal self-conception in the ontological, epistemological and ethical spheres, which is pivotal to the occurrence of the con-tactile aesthetic-ethic, finds its most articulate expression in Ann. One of the earliest manifestations of the centrality of embodiment, evinces itself in women's belief (and Ann's in particular) in and adherence to a more corporeal, gestural and material mode of expression. Such a stance not only signifies an intimate and intrinsic interwovenness of corporeality and language on the side of Ann (as well as Skinner) but also, as such they evidently strive to unmoor both their body and language from the annexation of the isomorphic and casuistical language of the phallogocentric discourse (manifest in Krak and Stucley's speeches). Ann advocates and wields a language more carnal and performative and hence less appropriable by the representational frame of patriarchal language and less amenable to subjection to the logic of transcendence and identity (see Ann's subtle recourse to a performative silence in her encounter with Stucley 204-6; also see the argument between Ann and Skinner on the viability and ambivalent status of language 218. And finally this vexing issue/characteristic finds its paradigmatic illustration in the encounter between Ann and Nailer 226).

Encountering Krak for the first time, she primarily describes her impression in terms of affective drives and intensely corporeal figures: “My belly's a fist. Went clench on seeing you, went rock. And womb a tumour. All my soft, rigid” (201). Here her words are freighted and ambivalent, intimating both the petrifying-reifying effect of Krak’s gaze and her being stricken carnally by his presence. A little further on, Ann flaunts her femaleness and desire-laden openness advancing her body to challenge his rationality and neutrality: “Can you stand a woman who talks of her cunt? I am all enlarged for you ... [He stares at her.] Now you humiliate me. By silence. I am not humiliated” (232).

Furthermore, in keeping with her incisive linguistic consciousness, she extends her critique to the existential and epistemological dimensions of subjectivity, and adverts to the fact that patrilineal legacies are not innate heredities or merely mental inculcations but more subtly, they are corporeally inscribed and sedimented in the folds of the flesh and carried out unconsciously from within. Skinner gives voice to her own stance and clearly Ann’s also: “we all bring to the world, inside our skulls, inside our bellies, Christ knows what lumber from our makers **but**. You do not lie down to the burden, you toss it off. The whine ‘I am made like that’ will not wash, will it? Correct me if I’m wrong, will it?” (217). This passage hints at the ‘constructedness’ of the signification, function and even materiality of not only gender but more radically bodies and thus tacitly repudiates its being essential and biologically and pre-culturally given (see *BTM* 4-15). Her mentioning of the word ‘makers’ corroborates this strain and from her remarks throughout the play, it can be deduced that by ‘makers’ she might intend nature as well as the triad (God, Cock and the Bailiff (203)) which they embarked on its abolition.

The foregoing statement also corroborates Ann’s belief in the dynamics of corporeal self and manifests corporeality as a fabricatable, performative construct (in a chiasmatic performative interplay with the Other) which hence accommodates the possibility of an aesthetics of the body; a belief in the (re/trans-)formation of the body and re-determination of its relation with discourse and the Other. Ann’s approach is immediately evocative of, and its implications can be further illuminated by, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological reflections on the lived and libidinal body. Merleau-Ponty, highly consonant with Skinner’s trope, considers the body as a fabric into which all things are woven (*PP* 235) For Merleau-Ponty “our body is comparable to a work of art” (*PP* 152). Noting the aesthetic quality of the body (in its concretizing the simultaneity of expression

and the expressed) thus, Merleau-Ponty proceeds to indicate "body of the painter is the site of a 'secret and feverish genesis of things'" ("Eye and Mind" in *Merleau-Ponty Reader* 357). Another corollary of such an aesthetic property is the asymmetrical and chiasmatic reciprocity of the self and the other an a nexus in which both merge and traverse each other: on the one hand, "[y]our act is you", and, on the other, the world also acts upon, or holds us (*PP* 456). In other words, first "we are acted upon," then "we are open to an infinite number of possibilities." As such, "There is [...] never determinism and never absolute choice..." (*PP* 453). Drawing on Merleau-Ponty, Diane Louise Prosser elaborates on the term *aesthetics of the* body, which, according to her, designates "the ongoing tension between habitual modes of relatedness and the remainder of these relations in an ever-shifting, ever-moving phenomenal field" (see 24-31); and as we will see below, this is what both Ann and Skinner affirmatively embrace, though in reverse directions.

Ann, as can be inferred from her traits and dispositions pervasive in the play (and partly demonstrated above), is characterized by alter-ation, non-conformism (her being defiant of the determinate subject positions and discursive relations of the symbolic order) and mutability (read becoming-other, heteronomy, and transversal fluidity). Now, the philosophical account of desire that Deleuze and Guattari propound helps demonstrate and unfold the implications of Ann's mode of desire. Desire assumes a salient significance in their critique of the repressive nature of capitalistic modernity and the raison d'etre of their theory is desire coalesced with the machine, and production. They maintain that human beings are "desiring machines"[86] and recognize desire as emancipatory: "Desire does not want revolution, it is revolutionary in its own right" (*Anti-Oedipus* 116). Deleuze and Guattari contend that the dominant philosophical-psychoanalytical discourses have always endeavored to represent desire in terms of lack, negativity, and loss and to

[86] In keeping with their materialist semiotics of desire, Deleuze and Guattari assert that non-organic desire within social production is something which is engineered, something cultivated in the individual to enlist her or him in the preservation of the prevailing mode of production: "The schizoanalytic argument is simple: desire is a machine, a synthesis of machines, a machinic arrangement - desiring machines" (*ATP* 296). Deleuze and Guattari give what Machine (or desiring machine for that matter) designates both a non-totalizing configuration of forces, or components, and a non-totalizing relation between parts. Machine as articulated or underscored/asserted by them is not a metaphor nor does it involve a metaphorical approach, but is rather real, and its essence is action and production, instigating metamorphosis: "The diagrammatic or abstract machine does not function to represent, even something real, but rather constructs a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality" (*ATP* 142). Elsewhere they provide another elucidating explanation which further unfolds its implications: "Schizoanalysis foregoes all interpretation because it foregoes discovering an unconscious material: the unconscious does not mean anything. On the other hand the unconscious constructs machines, which are machines of desire, whose use and functioning schizoanalysis discovers in their immanent relationship with social machines. The unconscious does not speak, it engineers. It is not expressive or representative, but productive" (*AO* 180).

confine it to the private space of individual psyche and familial structure. Desire, from their viewpoint, however, is a totally positive force designating productivity and multiplicity. Repudiating the first attitude, they maintain: "From the moment that we place desire on the side of acquisition, we make desire an idealistic conception, which causes us to look upon it as primarily a lack: a lack of an object…. Desire does not lack anything" (*AO* 25). Elsewhere they argue: "desire produces, [and] it product is real" (*AO* 64) and even more cogently: "Social production is libidinal and libidinal production is social" (*AO* 73).

They posit two modes of desire (which designate two modes of relation, psychic investment and praxis too): the radical desire of schizophrenia and the reactionary desire of paranoia or fascism (see *AO* 93-97). The former is founded on decentralization, incessant flux, productivity, and materiality and the latter is authoritarian, centralizing/ed, exploitative and abstracting; in other words, the reified form of desire subjected to socially-authorized belief (in God, the Father, the One and the like). In their argument, these two kinds of desire are not antithetical and mutually exclusive but two modalities of one signifying system in which the primacy and prevalence of one determines the dominant pragmatics and orientation of the system. They maintain that modern capitalistic discourses seek to restrict and repress this potentiality by channeling it in "proper paths", by re-territorializing and recoding it. In effect, "To code desire… is the business of the socius" (*AO* 139). Schizoid desire (which designates a process rather than an acutely pathological state, schizophrenia, as Deleuze and Guattari emphatically observe, is not a mental "breakdown" but a socio-political "breakthrough" (*AO* 167). The schizo-nomadic mode of desire disrupts the social stratifications, dismantles hierarchical structurations, and unscrambles their codes; it "is a free-flowing physical energy that establishes random, fragmented, and multiple connections with material flows and partial objects" (*AO* 87). As such, it is tightly connected with aesth/ethics.

In fact, one of the inklings that reveals the affinity between Skinner and Stucley, not only concerning their socio-political attitude but their ethical character is that their mode of affective investment in inter-personal relations in addition to their approach to the other are impelled by "paranoid desire", which is obsessive, fixative, aggressive, possessive, and striking death whenever it emerges. Stucley at one point professes that the only kind of desire he approves of and commits himself to is an exclusive desire: "There is one chastity and only one. The exclusiveness of desire, not willed but forced by passion" (221). Ann, on the contrary, despite all her feminine

allegiances and sympathies with Skinner and other women, resolutely refuses to immolate any of her desire as well as her instinctive inclinations in the interests of ideology, needs of the self or even in favor of others' (not the Other's) distress. Here a brief account of Deleuze and Guattari's notion philosophy of desire seems necessary and elucidating.

Deleuze and Guattari repudiate the strict distinction between desiring-production (of fantasy) and social-production (of reality) as posited by the capitalistic discourse, and contend that "The truth of the matter is that *social production is purely and simply desiring-production itself under determinate conditions*" (*AO* 29). Accordingly, Ann's incarnation and enactment of her schizo-nomadic mode of desire is not something confined to the intimate sphere or private mode of inter-personal interaction and relationship, yet contrariwise instigates repercussive socio-political consequences not least among which are the re-writing of the Bible by Stucley, the re-configuration of the castle and eventually ethico-existential conversion of Krak; all three of which starkly mark the three turning points in the play. This in effect is the manner in which she disrupts and undermines the representational grid of the phallogocentric discourse/paradigm and "To liberate desire from its enslavement to the theatre of representation and overturn this theatre into the order of desiring-production, this is the whole task of schizoanalysis" (*Anti-Oedipus* 173).

In this regard, the other pertinent strain that draws our attention to the more profound likeness between Stucley and Skinner is their demeanor and/treatment towards Ann (see also Lamb 143). Initially, a fervent care for her ensued by an agonized rancor and eventually a death-ridden repulsion as is palpable in her words here: "I would rather you were dead than took a step or shuffle back from me. Dead, and I would do it" (219). Furthermore, two issues sound conspicuous. First is Skinner's obsession with Ann's fertility, which occupies at least half of her speech. She admits that she feels implacably envious of her fecundity. The second inkling emerges when she asserts herself as pertaining to the castle - even to the point of identification which betrays her dormant territorial authoritarian proclivities: "I belong here. I am the castle also" (240). Thus we can conclude that both Skinner and Stucley are given to politics (of desire) and hence (its) territorialization; Ann, in a keen contrast, is given to aesthethics (of desire) and hence de-territorialization.

While 'horizon' is the vital word in Ann's language, it is the word 'territory' (or country) which occupies the center stage in Skinner and Stucley's discourse and mind. Both Skinner and

Stucley strenuously insist on their territory and refuse to renounce it even when within its constricting confines they are perishing. The word 'horizon' might appear in Stucley's parlance as well; nevertheless while to Ann it designates passage and exposure, to Stucley it designates possession and enclosure. When Ann demands that he should abandon his state and depart, to "go on" towards "the horizon", he retorts: "I own horizon"; yet Ann counters: "cross it, then" (208).

Later, she admonishes the severely tormented Skinner - who has been released, burdened with the cadaver of Holiday chained to her chest as her punishment - to do the same thing as she exhorts her husband here. Skinner declines and persists in clinging to the corpse (of dead attachments, territory, pains and obsessions):

> Ann: you should go. (pause.)
>
> Skinner: go...
>
> Ann: Yes. Not hang round here.
>
> Skinner: go where? I live here.
>
> Ann: no such thing as live here anymore, go where you might find peace and rub the thing off you, where you won't be stoned.
>
> Skinner: no.

Here she discloses her possessive, and even more significant, obsessive disposition. David Ian Rabey in his exposition and discussion of the play considers the obsessive characters in Barker's works favorably and valorizes them as ec-centric, autonomous and non-conformist characters. Rabey, dignifying such characters as possessing a free mode of subjectivity and existence, argues that the obsessive characters, with Skinner as a prominent example, "resist others prescribing or imposing compartmentalization of the self; they incur outrage and hostility through their rejection of wit and theory" (155). Even though Skinner is not bereft of a partially dynamic conception of (embodied) self and modes of relating to discourse, I would like to take issue with Rabey's interpretation of her obsession and argue that it verges on being authoritarian, and emanates from her fixation and compulsion to possession.

In this regard, a glance at Levinas' take on the inter-subjective and ethical facets of "obsession" can be illuminating. Levinas defines obsession as a relation of non-reciprocal affectivity in which ego unsays or relinquishes its egoity (*OB* 192-2); yet he differentiates between the good obsession of responsibility and the bad obsession of resentment (*OB* 84; see also Hutchens 95-98), positing the former as ethically superior. The two modes of obsession, however, are not antithetical or mutually exclusive but proximate and finely divided. Their characteristics are somewhat ambivalent and problematic. While the former is affirmative, active and protective, the latter is reactive, possessive, retentive, restrictive, intimately linked, to the fascist-paranoid desire expounded above: "although resentment is helpful to responsibility in the sense that it shatters the egoism of the self one could still respond indeclinably to the other but one must be doing so without true sincerity, humility or even true obsession" (96). The latter mode of obsession (intolerant of separation, difference, and detachment) manifests its baleful facet in Skinner's remark when she asserts in a seething tone: "I would rather you were dead than took a step or shuffle back from me. Dead, and I would do it" (219). Her assertion lays bare the latent death-wish underlying this symptomatic attachment, desiring the intensely in-vested desideratum for self-identity, self-assertion, and self-determination. Stucley by striking a similar chord betrays his inveterate obsession by expecting his wife on his very arrival dead: "Is my wife dead? Must be, must be because I love her so, she's dead, it stands to reason, where is **she buried?** What was it, fever? Fever, merciful fever? No, she was banged to death by bandits" (200).

Ann, herself, expecting a child, appeals to Krak to forsake the castle and to "go on over the horizon" with her. He tells her that the castle is ubiquitous and there is no shelter from it[87] and this occasions her suicide. Her fall lies in her conceding to the logic of paranoid/fascist desire and hence in renouncing her schizo/nomadic desire: "There is nowhere except where you are. Correct. Thank you. If it happens somewhere, it will happen everywhere. There is nowhere except where you are. Thank you for truth" (244). After a tense moment of hesitation, she kneels, draws out a knife and takes her own life. This ostensibly sterile reaction immediately evokes Fricker's argument that: "a policy of ironism, localness and nomadism can provide no solution at all to the problem of how to refrain from discursive terrorism" (157), because she firmly maintains such strategies breed ironic outcomes and solely incur more "cynicism and capriciousness" to the

[87] An utterance which intensely evokes Althusser's conception of ideology see *Lenin and Philosophy* 162-3.

detriment of their practitioners. But of course it must be noted that in her article, she adopts a caustically critical stance towards postmodern trends of thought and promotes the pursuit of a discursive reason not devoid of traces of Enlightenment rationalism and quasi-Kantian morality. Furthermore, her juxtaposition of ironism and nomadism, I would argue, proves highly problematic. She neglects the crucial difference between ironism and nomadism in that assuming an ironic stance invariably requires a certain extent of detachment whereas nomadism involves a profound and proximate implication; ironic stance is at best critical while nomadic stance strives to be pragmatic and at least gestures towards being constructive. The reason, I would argue, is that Ann's most grievous lack of insight in succumbing to Krak's inexorable attitude lies in her failure to recognize, Foucault's contention, that omni-presence of power is not tantamount to omni-potence of power (Best and Kellner 55). More important, her suicide does not turn out to be entirely vain or futile; it is immediately followed by the mass suicide of pregnant women which combined with other already brewing factors culminate in another subversive climax: the collapse of the castle and the decline of patriarchal authoritarianism (see 244).

Pregnancy and Maternity

In keeping with Ann's inter-corporeal and proximal predilection and her being given to a schizo-nomadic mode of desire is her being ceaselessly in the condition of pregnancy, her maternity. Indeed, Ann features as the paradigmatic figure of pregnancy/fecundity to the extent that this condition is depicted as one of the haunting preoccupations of the main characters specifically Skinner. Her smoldering jealousy is expressly perceptible in her words: "She was all womb. Tortured me with her fecundity, her moisture, birthing, birthing, very public, down among the harvest, crouches, yells, and slings it round her neck, where did I leave my sickle, oh, blood on her knees and afterbirth for supper (247). Significantly, she does not dawdle to differentiate herself from Ann in this regard: "and me like the arid purse of rattling coins, to her whim and feminine mood of the moon stuff danced my service… No womb lover me" (Ibid). What distinguishes Ann from an ordinary or typical maternal figure, however, is that it is not solely the biological condition of pregnancy which determines her being a fluid dynamic individual. This gender-determined trait is nonetheless affirmed and enhanced by her aesth/ethic fecundity, by her willing, and pursuit, of this manner of being and dynamics of relationality. She herself affirms the

hope she harbors in giving birth to children and as such displays her fecundity of body and spirit and her belief in multiplicity, proliferation and the emancipatory dimension of other-birthing. The decisive point resides in her association of birthing with both self-birthing and love: "The ease of making children. The facility of numerousness. Plague, yes, but after the plague, the endless copulation of the immune. All these children, children everywhere and I thought, this one matters, alone of them this one matters because it came from love" (243). Evidently, such an existential mode is subversive to autonomous identity and sovereign subjectivity. In this regard, Kristeva's psycho-social account of pregnancy/maternity can have a substantial bearing on Ann's existential and ethical position in the play.

According to Kristeva, maternity and its correlate, pregnancy, do not lead to an assertion of sexual identity of mother but, conversely, undermine her subjectivity or agency. As she remarks: "Pregnancy seems to be experienced as the radical ordeal of the splitting of the subject: redoubling up of the body, separation and coexistence of the self and another, of nature and consciousness, of physiology and speech" ("Women's Time,"; cf. Kristeva, "Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini," 238.). Indeed, as Elizabeth Grosz, elaborating on Kristeva's attitude, notes, "maternity is a process without a subject" (79); or elsewhere she observes, "pregnancy has no subject". Kristeva proceeds to contend that the maternal is implicated in a "catastrophe of identity" (162).[88] By the same token, she identifies maternity as the threshold of culture and nature, arguing that maternity is not the act of an agent but a succession of rhythmical, re/deconstructive and fragmentary processes that the mother undergoes. Maternity is the embodiment of the abject state and the maternal body that of an abject space: a non-objective, non-subjective relationship between the self and the other, the mother and the child (see *Powers of Horror* 1-2). Maternity is proliferation,

[88] Levinas in *Otherwise than Being* establishes a crucial connection between sensibility, negativity, and materiality (and their ethical dimensions and implications) and maternity: "It [sensibility as contact] is being torn up from oneself, being less than nothing, a rejection into the negative, behind nothingness; it is maternity, gestation of the other in the same. Is not the restlessness of someone persecuted but a modification of maternity, the groaning of the wounded entrails by those it will bear or has borne? In maternity what signifies is a responsibility for others, to the point of substitution for others and suffering both from the effect of persecution and from the persecuting itself in which the persecutor sinks. Maternity, which is bearing par excellence, bears even responsibility for the persecuting by the persecutor" (75).

fragmentation, multiplication, merging and fusion, fluency and affluence, alter-ation and alternation (*DL* 237-9).[89]

The aforesaid liminal and essentially ambivalent state of agency/subjectivity, prevailing in pregnancy, can be vividly detected in Queen's confounded state in Barker's *Knowledge and a Girl*, when she as a middle-aged woman finds herself pregnant: "My womb's tripped me / Pretending all these years to be a / desert at this least perfect of all moments it goes lush / My desert is a river suddenly" (121). Her subsequent remark, accentuating her pregnancy as an involuntary affectivity, is eloquently expressive: "[...] pregnant women are seized from the inside / Abducted by our pregnancy / More sugar more Salt / Now A Walk By The Sea / says the tenant of my belly" (124). In keeping with the point at issue and resonant with the foregoing situations, in *The Europeans* Susannah is perplexed at her being seized with an inner, irresistible impulse to bear a child: "What is all this **didn't** with him? I want a child. God knows why. What do I want a child for?" An interrogation to which Katrin suggestively responds: "It is not a matter of you wanting a child. It is the child wanting. I know. I never wanted a child. But the child wanted. All this 'I never asked

[89] Pregnancy and the existential modes and conditions attendant upon it, given its highly significant bodily alterations and psycho-somatic implications, do not escape Merleau-Ponty's attention. Merleau-Ponty broaches and explores pregnancy (and maternity) not only in terms of its changes in the unified phenomenological subject (more particularly, affecting the subject's intentionality structure, her embodied identity as well as her perception of spatiality, temporality and motility), but also changes in the flesh structure of the ontological individuality. Referring to pregnancy as not solely an individual process of self-adaptation or transformation but involving self-crisis, self-loss and self-transcendence, he explains how the developing presence of another body instigates or prompts a corporeal self-alienation in the mother: "She feels her own body to be alienated from her" (Merleau-Ponty 1988, 101). Indicating the fact that pregnancy involves an inherently ambivalent ontological situation, he expatiates how, in such a state, the bodily boundaries are rendered more fluid and blurred; how the integrity of the subjective body is disrupted; and in consequence, the subject is decentred feeling simultaneously split and doubled. The foregoing state is, in effect, a state which not only foregrounds the structure of the flesh (characterized with self-divergence and reversibility), but also makes the individual perceive it much more intensely and palpably.

Accordingly, Merleau-Ponty proceeds to elaborate on the manner pregnancy occasions a cataclysm in the ontological position of the mother, and how in the wake of pregnancy she is initiated into inhabiting in a *primitive* state: "The woman with child lives her pregnancy in a primitive manner" (Merleau-Ponty 1988, 101). The use of the notion of "primitiveness" in relation to pregnancy, at stake here, can be construed to designate a pre-subjective manner of being and relating; and betokening or portending the emergence of a heteronomous dimension and the enfoldment of the mother in an anonymous process: "Her own pregnancy is not for her an act like others she accomplishes with her body. It is more an anonymous process that takes place through her and of which she is only the seat (*siège*)" (1988, 101).

Finally, adverting to the chiasmatic relationship between mother and the embryo (informed and underpinned at once with proximity and differance), Merleau-Ponty calls this a "mystery" surrounding the non-dichotomous and hyper-dialectical "order of life": "On the one hand, her own body escapes her, but, on the other hand, the infant which is to be born is an extension of her own body. During the entirety of her pregnancy, the woman is living a major mystery, which is neither the order of matter nor the order of the mind, but, rather, *the order of life*" (1988, 101).

to be born' etcetera, piss and nonsense! I know. The unborn, the unconceived, force the act upon the parents **Get her on the ground it says. Get him in your body it says**" (91-2).

Analogously, though tacit throughout the play, Ann in her pregnancy constantly holds and is held by the other. In fact, her pregnancy accords her a unique relationship with alterity, a continuous (inter)corporeal proximity. Such an ethical status unremittingly challenges the conventional and established morality[90] pervasive in the play and impersonated and implemented by Stucley, which to Kristeva (and Levinas) is characterized by the transcendental and/or rational imperatives, a unitary, disembodied subject, a morality in which woman holds a negative and equivocal position, if at all.

Ethics, as conceived here, designates a signifying practice, a manner of being and relating, a(n) (inter)corporeal process which is primarily oriented towards alterity; it not only takes as its subject an essentially embodied individual but also displaces the self into a natural or social hitherto unsymbolized outside and thus entails the incorporation of heterogeneous forces and conflictual flows and fissures within the self (RPL 203-4)[91]. In effect, an ethical self is a self-in-crisis. Accordingly, Kristeva defines (her)ethics as "negativizing of narcissism within a practice" (*RPL* 233) and articulates the premises of it thus: "Now if a contemporary ethics is no longer seen as morality; if ethics amounts to not avoiding the embarrassing and inevitable problematics of the law but giving it flesh, language, jouissance - in that case its formulation demands the contribution of women" ("Stabat Mater" 185). Pregnancy can be regarded as the emblematic incarnation of the Aesth/Ethic practice in the sense I posed above. As such, pregnancy approximates the function or significance of the Levinasian notion of 'the feminine' as "an essential rupture to the virility of the force of being" (cited in Ainley 56).

As mentioned above Ann's pregnancy comes to be established as one of the recurrent themes and points of obsession of other characters particularly Skinner and Stucley and brought to a sharp and significant relief against the backdrop of their sexual sterility. Skinner illustrates her fecundity and fluidity by beckoning to her constantly moist garments: "You and your reproductive

[90] Morality as intended and defined here is premised on Kantian and Hegelian principles.

[91] What renders Kristeva's conception of ethics even more in accord with my discussion here is that the subject of this experience in practice is "an excess, never one, always already divided" (*RPL* 203-4; see also David Fisher 95-6)

satisfactions, your breasts and your lactation, dresses forever soddened at the tit" (240). What enhances and intensifies her maternal position as an ethical and spatial dimension is her being intimately associated with 'womb'. "The womb", in the play, is not only repeatedly regarded as the distinctive trait of woman, which attaches her to nature, abundance, openness, and above all to alterity, it owns two more crucial dimensions. Firstly it features as a metonymical material (choratic) space: as a locus of transfiguration and transubstantiation; and secondly, a metaphorical space, as a non-subjective non-patriarchal and non-phallic space for resistance to and defiance of the phallocentric paradigm; and as a metaphorical space Ann proves to be pregnant with catastrophe and as Barker elsewhere underscores, "catastrophe is also birth" (*WBW* 180). As such, she not only dwells in an aesthetic chiasmatic space but also an ethical choratic space. From an early stage in *The Castle* woman's inner bodily space, particularly the womb (coupled with female desire) is recognized as a spatial excess, a transgressive presence and hence minatory to the stability, continuity and unity of patriarchal paradigm. Krak in an admonitory tone says: "European woman with her passion for old men, wants to drown their history in her bowel…!" (241). This is poignantly yet obliquely reflected in the uncanny manner the castle comes to assume the guise of a womb which gives birth to still-born children and mutilated wombs (women flinging themselves off the walls of the castle). The further evidence emerges when towards the end of the play, women are committing mass suicide and outrageously squandering the natural-divine gift as Nailer exclaims: "These bitches will put paid to the race ..." (244); adding that pregnant women "bear our future in their innards and they kill it" (245).

Now, the point which Kristeva touches upon in her account of maternity, which is also illuminating to our study of Ann's ethical character and her socio-symbolic status in the discourse, is that maternity in addition to being a function, a role/status or a process, is "a space", but a contradictory, ambivalent and intrinsically ambiguous space. She defines it as "a simultaneously dual and alien space" (*DL* 238); as a site of tension and struggle between identity and non-identity; as the incarnation of simultaneous ecart of dehiscence and entre-deux of connaissance. Such a self is virtually inimical to discursive demarcations and analytics of power: "The maternal body slips away from the discursive hold and immediately conceals a ciphering of the species, however this pre- and trans-symbolic memory … makes the maternal body the stakes of a natural and objective world" (Ibid).

The notion of maternity as a transgressive liminal space as well as an inherently motile space has a crucial bearing on the issue of ethics in the play. Maternity/pregnancy, as discussed by Kristeva, akin to ethics, are matters of positionality; and positionality renders morality immanent, contingent and bound up with spatio-temporal dimensions. As such, positionality places ethics in a material, socio-historical and inter-corporeal context yet always at an angle with the present conditions and never subordinate to the dominant structures; as Ainley argues, "positionality is counter to a metaphysical hypostatization of Woman, certain manifestations of which may appear in feminism in the forms of sacrifice or violence (59-60). In fact, positionality entails a mobilizing process which enables the possibility of heterogeneous "positionalities of subject" pointing to an interminable "construction and destruction instead of an original formative speaker" (59).

Ann's volatility of positions is indeed a salient testimony to the foregoing points. The space in which Ann resides is a borderline state mediating between and beyond the discursive and non-discursive, the semiotic and the symbolic. And her body, as a maternal body, constitutes a fold (pli) between the natural and the cultural. Ann occupies a twofold or double-edged status; she is both the 'mother' and the 'other'. (see Ainley 57-9 and Grosz 79-81). On the other hand, Ann's being 'the other' (the other to the phallogocentric discourse and to the autonomous identity) emanates not only from her embodying the polymorphic, the excessive, the surplus value and jouissance, as a transgressively desirous woman, but it can also be ascribed to the fact that Ann, in her ceaseless pregnancy, constantly inhabits and is inhabited by the Other. Succinctly, her chiasmatic body is an inter-text, in/through which the causal, linear and rational narrative of the phallogocentric discourse is un/re/over-written.

Based on the preceding points, she figures as a fundamentally unstable and above all abject semeion, which circulates among the strictures of phallogocentric discourse and intensely subverts the stable signs (other subjects): Stucley, partially Skinner and finally Krak. Accordingly, though they are all affected and infected in their contacts with her, yet, as we will witness, Stucley and Skinner react repulsively; and, it is only Krak who gets impregnated by Ann, bears Ann, bears with Ann, and lets Ann bear him in a moment of seductive de-armoring in a space of inter-corporeal intimacy, though, significantly, the event of sense takes place après coup.

The Castle

The importance of the castle is signaled in the title of the play; in fact the castle comes to occupy the focal point of dramatic action and its "erection" initiates a nexus of reverberations that continues well-nigh to the end of the play. The castle is primarily a mental phenomenon: "the manifestation of consciousness" (Barker 1990, 21) and its abrupt imposition upon the stage accentuates its appearance in response to an intense psycho-somatic compulsion: "The castle is not set but as the outcome of spiritual despair" (Ibid). In effect, the castle features as the embodiment of that concealed axis around which most interpersonal relationships revolve. Notwithstanding all these facts, the substantial quality of the castle must not be neglected. It is this very being poised between materiality and immateriality that endows it with irresolvable ambivalence and renders it subversive and seductive.

Though the castle which Barker places on the stage owns many features of medieval citadels (see Lamb 116-8), still the incorporated castle as a symbol of both authoritarian and disciplinary politics, in its phallic posture, like other anachronisms traversing the play, is not historically bound to the medieval period and evinces numerous aspects of Foucault's genealogical analysis of the panopticon –as proposed by Bentham- as well (see *Discipline and Punishment* 75-8, 201, 204-5, 249)[92]. The panopticon, as Foucault discusses, is an ideal apparatus, utilized by modern discourses for both individual and mass subjection and surveillance. Elaborating on the metaphorical facets of the panopticon, Foucault indicates that the panopticon is not confined to punitive-penal organizations but is extendable to other spheres of socio-political and personal life, intended to produce *panoptic subjectivity* (a mode for which both early Krak and Stucley can be considered as

[92] The following excerpt distils the effects of Panopticon and how it promotes an impression of surveillance being total and unremitting through the visibility-invisibility dynamics:
Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent pf the person who excercises it; in short in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers (*DP* 201)
Foucault significantly elucidates the mechanism underlying the evocation of an apparently generalized impersonality, automatism, and neutral necessity at work in Panopticon:
The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without being seen. It is an important mechanism, for it automatizes and disindividualizes power. Power has its principle not so much in a person as a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which the individuals are caught up (201-2)

paradigmatic instances) characterized by the internalization of institutional power and an immanent and ubiquitous form of self-regulation and normalization. This dimension of the castle has a salient bearing on the result of the relationship between Krak and Ann, when Krak in response to Ann's plea to depart from the realm deals the final lethal blow to her, asserting that the castle is everywhere (239-40).

One of the cogent accounts which corroborates the panoptical structure of the castle can be detected in Krak's delineation of its design to Stucley[93]:

> No place is not watched by another place … The heights are actually depths … The weak points are actually strong points … The entrances are exits … The doors lead into pits … It resembles a defence but is really an attack … It cannot be destroyed … Therefore it is a threat … It will make enemies where there are none … It makes war necessary.

Thus the castle in appearing as an assemblage in which irreconcilable traits have coercively been conjoined, epitomizes as well as discloses the function and mechanism of the dominant discourse both as a repressive and an ideological state apparatus. This fact enhances the castle's pertaining to a phallogocentric ideology and no less notable, accentuates the contemporary aspects of the play (see also 249). Krak's description, nevertheless, is seductively double-edged and shrouded in ambiguity and as it transpires towards the end of the play this ingenious structural ambivalence subverts the whole purpose as it gravitates towards the latent unintended dimension. Intimately linked with the question of panopticity is the castle's being laden with transcendental and religious associations. In this regard, the similarity between panopticon (and its underlying mechanisms of anonymity, totalization, transparency and visibility) and the Christian God's omniscience and omni-presence is striking. Furthermore, it seems to be the principal reason for Stucley's being driven out of reason as he moulds it after the fashion of this conception of God.

To focus our attention back onto *The Castle*, another point that should be noted, as regards the structural facet of the castle, is that the very construction of the castle on *the hill* (which, as already indicated, is intimately linked with the feminine and far more precarious and slippery than any other grounds, coupled with its being undiminished muffled up in haze and rain) and not on *the*

[93] See also Batter's view on this this issue p. 215.

rock, which is far more stalwart, as it hampers any possibility of pregnation, indicates a covert and un-preconceived inclusion of the feminine element in its structure. Though, at first glance, the castle might signify the imposition of masculine rigidity, uni(formi)ty and sovereignty on feminine openness, seductiveness, and fluidity, yet it later appears that the very same fact enables the feminine "supplement" to contact and contaminate the male-dominant system, featuring as what Irigaray refers to as the “silent substratum” of the male paradigm. As such, the female and the feminine only apparently serve as the terra firma and terra incognita (see Fricker and Hornsby 130) of patriarchal paradigm in the play. Thus the phallic castle proves counter-phallic.

This establishment of what is initially intended as a masculine construct onto an ostensibly feminine base is further elucidated by Irigaray’s arguments concerning such a concealed symbiotic relationship. Irigaray contends that the distinctiveness and unity of speculative superstructure demands a fuzzy and physical base - the “undifferentiated opaqueness of sensible matter” (*SO* 224) - from which to have a metaphysical progress towards the lucidity of absolute reflexivity; yet "this indecidability is ultimately its downfall" (Walter 117). For Irigaray, woman’s exclusion from immediate presence or representation in the dominant discourse, the vacuous locus she is allocated, and the repudiation of the essential role the (sexuate) body plays in the fabrication of identity and subjectivity all manifest the recognition of the feminine/female as the "guardian of the negative" in such a discourse (*SO,* 98); or more strictly, the feminine is utilized not only as a portal - “the store of substance for the sublation of the self” (*SO* 224)- which must be relinquished in order for the transcendental progress of the intellectual-spiritual subject to be propitious and burgeoning, but as a re-assuring ground to return to or rely on (see also Whitford 152-4). As she argues elsewhere, this notion of femininity serves as its negative yet propelling force: “The ‘enigma of women’ would serve as a sign of his [the male’s] progression towards knowledge. For his past, he would have to let into the forces of consciousness, this non-knowledge that she seemingly perpetrates this ‘unconsciousness’ that has been allocated to her without her knowing it” (*SO* 111-2).

Stucley’s blatant remarks in the penultimate scene testify to the presence of the same logic of discourse and representation in Barker’s play. There, Stucley arrives distraught and daunted by the morass-like mass the castle has lapsed into (exacerbated by Krak’s treacherous trading of diagrams with the enemy and the looming of a rival adversarial fortress) to possibly castigate or

even convict Krak, yet is confronted with Krak's obsessive mental detachment and sensual absorption in drawing female genitalia in twenty seven versions. Thus he harangues: "DON'T DRAW FEMALE BODIES. I'M TALKING! This is a crisis, isn't it? ". Then even he is momentarily swayed from his paranoiac course exclaiming: "–IS THAT MY WIFE'S BITS –I wouldn't know them – what man would…" (243). As such, he inadvertently discloses the non-representation of the female sexual organ (and her mode of corporeo-ethical being), and its "exclusion" from patriarchal metaphysical discourse.[94] Furthermore, here female corporeality is the analogue for the feminine element, and the aforementioned excerpts illustrate how the calculated flow of words gets ruptured in the vortex of an a-signifying entity; the number of caesuras, ellipses, dashes and pauses in Stucley's acknowledgement is revealing: "The representation of that thing is not encouraged by the church. (Pause. He is looking at it.) It's wrong, surely, that- (Pause) I have never looked at one, but -" (242).

This association is evocative of a similar distinction in Irigaray's study of gender-based ontology and economy. Irigaray contrasts male and female modes of existence and their positions by posing two terms attributed to each respectively: "retour (return) and retouche (touching again)" (*ES* 60-65; see also Whitford 152-155), expressive of their two fundamentally different modes of being. She, in a characteristic move, aligns disposition towards the earth, the ground, male discourse and metaphysics, arguing how the male subject sustains his transcendental movement or ecstatic elevation on such a ground (though unrepresented, repressed or effaced) and evinces inextinguishable predilection to return (resulting in and indicative of homeostasis), whereas female mode both corporeally and linguistically is characterized by proximity, auto-affection and tactility.[95] In this regard she explains how Heidegger's ontological philosophy, as a philosophical instance, is predicated on metaphysics: "If there is no more earth to press down/repress, to work, to represent, but also and always to desire (for one's own), no opaque matter which in theory does not know itself, then what socle [base, ground or pedestal] remains for the ek-sistence of the subject? If the earth turned and more especially turned upon herself/itself, the erection of the subject might thereby be disconcerted and risk losing its elevation and penetration, For what would be there to rise up from and exercise power over?" (*SO* 133).

[94] See Foucault's *The Order of Discourse* and *Madness and Civilization*; also see Butler's *Bodies that Matter* 3-27.
[95] The central conceptual figures she poses to illustrate her thesis are two lips and mucosity. See Whitford's elaboration of these terms 159-167.

Similarly, as is evidently born out in Barker's play, what was assumed to be inert and innocuous matter/earth/maternal proves subversive, elusive and even seductive in relation to both the foundations of the castle and the metaphysical premises of the phallogocentric discourse. Indeed, the self-consciousness of this ground in the play brings about the demolition of the castle. This realization of the uncanny resurgence of the excluded as an destabilizing/unstable object inside or within is acutely evident in Stucley's denunciation, when the ground proves to be not an upholding but an undermining entity: "Having hewn away two hills to make us safe, having knifed the landscape to preserve us we find - horror of horrors - **the worst within** … I find that a blow … Who can you trust? Trust!" (235). Holiday grotesquely exemplifies this reliance of the male on the ground and his aspiration to be the master of both by his ventures into the air while remaining the owner of the earth for stability and subsistence. During the construction activities, when he is lifted off the ground to preside over the correct implementation of Krak's plans, he feels so vertiginous, being suspended in the air, that he desperately beseeches the workmen to take him down. When he reaches the ground, he utters: "Oh, lovely earth, immobile stationary thing! (He kisses it.)" (213).

As we will see, however, Barker's insight resides in his surpassing a crude dualism by adding a decisive twist to this binary logic, in the sense that in his non-essentialist treatment, the elements in the dichotomy are no longer bound up with a specific gender; a fact that adumbrates the proximal logic of *The Castle*. In fact, the ultimate outcome (to wit, the re-configured, or better disfigured, castle and, more importantly, Krak's transfigured inter-corporeal mode of existence) not only subverts and debunks this binary logic and its underpinnings, but reveals subtle implications, identifications, and complicities in the convoluted cluster of common attributes among characters despite their different genders. Thus, there are female characters who identify with and endorse the castle and territory (Skinner) and there are male characters who persist in a proximal logic and the dismantling of the castle (the later Krak). By the same token, intricate yet deep-seated affinities between male and female characters (Stucley and Skinner) who are avowedly antagonistic also accentuate the issue at stake as discussed in detail in the first section.

Re-writing the Bible

Stucley, in his existential grappling with God, gropes for charades to outwit and vanquish him. Having undergone several existential and ethical crises in the course of the play (the pain of inexplicable sexual sterility, his sense of being existentially and spiritually stranded and ultimately his being psycho-somatically traumatized by unfathomable ethical contradictions), he reconsiders his former conception of God as malicious and hostile and now declares his tenacious belief in god's insanity: "I have changed my view of God. I no longer regard Him as an evil deity that was excessive, evil, no. He's mad. It is only by recognizing God is mad that we can satisfactorily explain the random nature of -" (235). Accordingly, he offers his own "version of theology" (206) in which he takes the corporeality of the deity as the key to his own retaliation, release and his existentio-ethical re-definition and founds "the Church of the Christ the Lover" issuing his version of the Bible as "the Gospel of the Christ the Erect" (223). Furthermore, all this frenzied amendment of the orthodox religion and implementation of his own strand are coalesced with accelerating the progress of the castle as a cause for further exploitative employment of people. He burdens Nailer with this onus, stating: "I mean invoke Christ the Lover round the estate. I mean increase the yield of the demesne and plant more acres. Plough the woods. I want a further hour off them, with Christ's encouragement…" (207-8).

Turning to the body, restoring it to Christ and re-inscribing it into the religious text all arise from Stucley's desperate vagaries of mind and can be construed in two ways. Primarily it can be interpreted as an act or a gesture of defiance of a transcendental, purely spiritual and imperious God untouched by the non-sense of the sensuous, since such a god "can lend no comfort who has not been all the places that we have" (222). Secondly, he considers the body or more strictly corporeality, as a common ground to approach and to identify with Him and be His equal or counterpart. Indeed, given his idealism and sovereignty of the self, he requires a god concocted as his alter ego, with a profound grasp of pain and convulsing with an incomprehensible ordeal. As the play precipitately proceeds to its climactic point, he, akin to his intimation of God/self, assumes a more sinisterly detached stance from the world that besieges him.

Thus, Stucley administers an incisive deflection in the direction of logic and morality of phallogocentric discourse. As mentioned earlier, the phallogocentric discourses tend to reduce ethics and humanity to a set of abstract and general transcendent moral tenets in which corporeality, desire and the immediate demand of non-cognitive, pre-ontological encounter with

alterity have been effaced. Detecting "a thousand year conspiracy", Stucley diagnostically remonstrates: "Christ's cock […] Is nowhere mentioned! […] Nor the cocks of his disciples" and proceeds to say: "The gospels are scrupulous in their avoidance of anatomical and physiological description. We have, for example, no image of Christ's face, let alone his- [phallus]" (221). He, then, in a move to redress this discrepancy, reverses the process and attempts to re-establish an embodied, and even more subversively, a "sexuated", Christ. Such a carnally sublimated deity, refined and rarefied to the point of spiritual neutrality and abstraction, does not correspond to the impression Stucley has received in aspiring to him and endorsing his cause. What he intends to impart to the deity and make him savor is the experience of utter immanence, meaningless pain, and sensual agony in order to disturb his transcendental repose. Yet, a *disembodied* and a sexless, or probably *desexualized*, god is incapable of undergoing such states. He, while talking to Nailer, professes to his "longing to know God" (222) and then proceeds to mention the reason he has embarked on re-writing the Bible and re-configuring Christ: "to have some *sense* of Him, to put my finger into Christ and feel His heat, and what pained me, what agonized me I assure you, was not the absence of a face but His *castration*, this Christ who never suffered for the woman, who never felt the feeling which **makes no sense**" (Ibid).

Irrespective of the thwarted sexual love, erotic desire, and carnal promiscuity (on the part of Ann) that have propelled Stucley in this direction, his intense craving to see, touch and embody Christ is in keeping with a long-standing Christian tradition as discerned and philosophically elaborated by Jean-Luc Nancy. Nancy detects an anxiety permeating Christian thought concerning (sensible and tangible) presence and truth and, by implication, pervading the way in which Western culture conceives (or imagines) corporeality. This abiding concern is indelibly intermeshed with the act of touch, evoking immediate presence of the present. Nancy describes Christianity as being obsessed with the act of making present: "Hoc est enim corpus meum [this is my body], the phrase that is recited during the Christian ritual as bread is transformed into the body of Christ is a continued attempt to insist upon and verify flesh and blood presence (Nancy, *Corpus* 5). The impetus that propels the Christian to render present, to touch the body of Christ, is to reach reassurance, a measure of solidity upon the sensible world. However, as Nancy contends, such reassurance is invariably … by a certain anguish, a fear that the world of appearance is a world of unsubstantial shadows and reflections (Ian James 133–4). To Nancy, this solicitous preoccupation with presence testifies to an obsession with (im)mortality, certitude about faith: "The anxiety, the

desire to see, touch, and eat the body of God, to be that body and be nothing but that, forms the principle of Western (un)reason. That's why the body, bodily, never happens, least of all when it's named and convoked. For us the body is always sacrificed: eucharist". (Nancy, *Corpus* 5; emphasis in original)[96].

Nevertheless, Stucley harbours other un-orthodox intentions too. By having Christ experience the irrational will of the flesh thus, he intends to subject him to the same existentio-ethical aporias he is beset with. What renders the preceding passages crucial is Stucley's recognition of embodiment as the essential condition not just for apprehension and perception (as two fundamental aspects of the self as defined by Merleau-Ponty) but as the very ontological condition or ground for being human and having human experience. Merleau-Ponty refers to a reciprocal incorporation between self and the Other, and body and the world and defines being human as being essentially incarnate (*VI* 235) in his vivid illustration: "The world is inserted between two leaves of my body" (VI 137-8) and even more univocal than that he articulates them as invaginations of one fold. In his earlier work, he had argued that "our body is our vehicle for being in the world" (*PP* 812) and that, "Our body is our medium of having a world" (*PP* 790). All

[96] Nonetheless, the requisite for the omnipresence of the Deity (Christ) is his lack of physical presence, or his absence. The resurrected body of Jesus must depart (be absent, be beyond touch) in order for presence to be guaranteed; yet, paradoxically, this absence continually throws the possibility of true presence into question. Touch constitutes a crucial element of religious practice, associated with notions of taboo and sacredness While the act of touch constitutes central moments of the gospels (Christ's healing, absolving, raising from the dead), this kind of healing or remedial touch is saliently absent from John's gospel. There are two prominent moments in this gospel which explicitly involve touch (or the refusal of touch). The first is Thomas's hand in the wound of Christ's resurrected body (John 20.29). Here, the probing touch is the unwavering verifier of presence, a moment of haptic certitude. The second is the moment of noli me tangere, Christ's request to Mary Magdalene to not touch him in the garden subsequent to the resurrection (John 20.17). In this instance, however, touch is denied to Mary Magdalene. Christ is leaving and must be permitted to do so (see Nancy, *Noli Me Tangere* 47). As Nancy meticulously investigates various versions and implications of this clause/instruction in Latin, Greek and different translations - scrutinizing the semantic ambiguity informing the sentence: "Do not touch me" and "Do not wish to touch me" "stop holding onto me" "cease clinging to me" – he provocatively argues that the moment of noli me tangere "Is precisely the point where touching does not touch where it must not touch in order to carry out its touch (its art, its tact, its grace): the point or the space without dimension that separates what touching gathers together, the line that separates what touching gathers together, the line that separates the touching from the touched and thus the touch from itself."

Thus, on the one hand, there is in this narrative of an intense, penetrating touch between Christ and Thomas. On the other, there is the refusal of an intimate contact and the tactful withdrawal of the noli me tangere scene. Nancy's investigation of the representations of this moment throughout the history of art, in *Noli Me Tangere*, leads him to the conclusion that the two bodies – of Christ (of glory) and Mary (of flesh) disclose that "the possibility of carnal decay is given there, along with the possibility of glory" (47). For Nancy, this demonstrates the reliance of the spiritual upon the material, adumbrating the subversion of the notion of a metaphysical realm. For in Christianity, even though the body appears to be denigrated, it is, in fact, its essential element: "Only a body can be cut down or raised up, because only a body can touch or not touch. A spirit can do nothing of the sort" (48). Without the body of Christ, there would be no possibility of resurrection. This essay will be concerned primarily with the tension between the present, tangible body, and the body about to depart in.

knowledge is attained as embodied, and intentionality, individuality and relationality are indissociable from corporeality. The other notable point is that to Stucley the principal components that embodiment or incarnation entails are desire, pain and eroticism: entailing an incongruent interlocking of the individuality with other than the self, destabilization of autonomy and (inter)corporeal exposure to alterity. He discerns the radically transformative role of pain which renders the transcendental immanent. Pain, as Alphonso Lingis cogently explains, "is immanence; it is conscious, nothing but consciousness, a consciousness backed up to itself, mired in itself. To suffer pain is for consciousness to be unable to flee or retreat from itself, unable to project itself outside upon some outlying object or event" (58).

Thus, Nailer in a staggering incremental cut and thrust with Stucley lays the premises of the new church: "Body, Blood and Semen" (221). The adoption and inclusion of the first two components are not that much of an excessive contravention, since 'body and blood' have already been appropriated and assimilated to Christian theology both in the creed of Incarnation and in the liturgical practice of the Eucharist. Hence Stucley is still acting and moving within the bounds of orthodox Christianity yet displacing them, lending certain elements a subversive priority and thus, pushing them to their breaking points. His more transgressive step, nonetheless, resides in the incorporation of 'semen'; a move which renders irrevocably immanent and *sexual* what seemed to be patently transcendent and spiritual, and hence neutral. By adding the last element, "semen", to this sacred dyad he, in effect, *sexuates* and thus dismantles the whole rational and metaphysical scaffold of the phallogocentric paradigm. He perceptively realizes the sweeping effects that the infusion of the symbolic (not merely in a Lacanian or Kristevan sense) with the somatic-semiotic will occasion. Irigaray's compelling question sheds ample light on the issue in question: "… one may wonder whether taking into account the sexualization of discourse does not open up the possibility of a different relation to the transcendental. Neither simply objective nor simply subjective, neither univocally centered nor decentered, neither unique nor plural, but as the place up to now always collapsed in the ek-stasis of what I would call the Copula?" (*SO*, 55).

In addition to being driven by a longing to open up an immanent relational space or threshold with God, the other major reason for according libidinal corporeality to Christ is to make possible the experience of sexual frustration. Subsequently, Stucley goes on to include his chief intention: to inflict pain, "Now, we are closer to a man we understand, for at this moment of desire, Christ

knows the common lot". Then he hastens to add the last touch, "And she is sterile" (223). Nailer stunned exclaims: "Sterile?", in response to which Stucley adds: "Diseased beyond conception, yes. So that they find, in passion, also tragedy ..." (Ibid).

The most de-constructive move undertaken by Stucley occurs when he, strained to the limit of his mind and body, discerns the female body, particularly her choratic body (her womb and/or her space of maternity/pregnancy) as the punctum caecum of such a metaphysical and spiritual system. He touches the ontological and ideological nerve of this paradigm by re-insertion of the choratic space of a more original originary point, co-existent and co-extensive with, yet abolished from the transcendental dimension of the symbolic order of discourse.

Thus, Stucley poses the female body as a site of defiance of the patriarchal Father: as a point of relief, release and reformulation. What is notable in this regard is that, in the play, it is not the female body (or womb in particular) that is associated with dementia and disorder, but contrarily, it is sought out as a resort from or counterforce to the harrowing contradictions and the ruthless rationality of the Father's ("the Lunatic's") world. Stucley explains his belief to Nailer: "They say the Jews killed Christ, but that's nonsense, the Almighty did" (223). And when Nailer wonders about the cause, he replies: "Because His son discovered comfort. 'Oh, Father, why hast thou forsaken me?' Because in the body of the Magdalene He found the single space in which the madness of his father's world might be subdued. Unforgivable transgression the Lunatic could not forgive" (Ibid). Then in a fraction, moved by his own tragic vision, Stucley proceeds to adduce the salutary results: "You see how once Christ is restored to phallus, all contradictions are resolved" (Ibid).

Here, womb, intensely analogous to the Kristevan notion of choratic space, is deemed a space anterior to Logos. Drawing on Plato's *Timaeus*, Kristeva describes chora thus: "a receptacle, unnamable, improbable, hybrid, anterior to naming, to the One, to the father, and consequently, maternally connoted to such an extent that it merits 'not even the rank of syllable" (1980: 133). Such a perception of the feminine space (and consequently the female organ) particularly in its secular use has a long-standing presence in literature. Traumatic, recurrent and symptomatic image/topos of vagina dentata attests to the female genital organ's being a haunting threat to male's fantasy manifesting what underlies it, womb. Such a flagrant tendency exhibited by patriarchal texts to (su)oppress feminine corporeality and its correlates with an anxious predilection to

demonize and disguise this primary locus of procreation itself is very relevant and revealing. Relatedly, Irigaray observes, the "womb is never thought of as the primal place in which we become body. Therefore for many men it is variously phantasized as a devouring mouth, as a sewer . . . as a threat to the phallus" (247).

In contrast to Plato's use of the term as the original space or receptacle of the universe, the term in Kristeva's appropriation and deployment has undergone certain qualifications and modifications. Kristeva characterizes chora as an essentially tactile and motile space, a space of fluid connectivity precedent to temporality and spatiality (*RPL* 25-6). Yet as Lechte, Grosz and West-Pavlov all concur, notwithstanding its being prior to spatiality, chora and the semiotic both in their pre-Oedipal form and its resurgence in the form of the 'return of the repressed' in the works of the avant-garde, in Kristeva's depiction and definition, are mainly "couched in spatial terms of eruption, effraction, displacement" (West-Pavlov 45). In other words, it can be construed as a spatial intrusion or surging up of (deviant) space into (normative) temporality - described in spatial terms.

As can evidently be inferred from the foregoing passages, the source of the formidable potentiality and disruptive force which the feminine (including the womb) exerts, is clear. From an early stage in Barker's play woman's inner bodily space particularly the womb (coupled with female desire) is recognized as a spatial excess, a transgressive presence and hence minatory to the stability, continuity and unity of patriarchal paradigm. Krak in a warning tone says: "European woman with her passion for old men, wants to drown their history in her bowel…!" (241). The further evidence emerges when towards the end of the play, women are committing mass suicide gratuitously and outrageously squandering the natural-divine gift and grace of god as Nailer exclaims: "These bitches will put paid to the race ..." (244); adding that pregnant women "bear our future in their innards and they kill it" (245).

The use of the term 'history' here, associates men with time (Historical time as the teleological narrative of progress and perfection insinuated and dominated by men) and evokes the classical trope which masculinizes time and feminizes space (see *New Maladies* 204; see also Jardine 24-5). Krak's assertion reveals the pernicious possibility of the assimilation of the masculine linear progression in female's choratic vortex or the eruption of the matrix of the female into temporally ordered masculine arena in male's imaginary. It requires male time to settle and

purge the spatial chaos that female sensibility has occasioned (note also the recurrence of the same theme in the opening scene). Kristeva's identification of the female with "monumental (eternity) and cyclical (repetition) time and the male with a linear time (project, teleology, departure, progression and arrival)" ('Women's Time' 187) sheds ample light on the aforesaid respective distinctions and links the issue with our foregoing discussion about anastrophic and catastrophic modalities or conceptions of temporality (see also *SO*, 111-2). Furthermore such a linear conception of time stands in keen contrast to the moment of con/tactile aesth/ethics; the choratic moment of proximity is an in-between time; a mean-time; a non-linear, non-teleological entre-temps (see Levinas *CPP* 11; see also *God, Death and Time* 37, 64).

We should not however neglect the fact that in Stucley's delineation and treatment of Magdalene's womb, there exists an implicit hint of identification of woman with the unconscious, oblivion, amnesia, neutrality, space of zero-tension and hence its being proximate to death; yet a death in the lapsingly lapidary folds of the female sheltered from the atrocity of the Father (see Irigaray's *ES* 64). Furthermore the depiction of feminine body, or more specifically her womb, is riddled with contradiction: both as an autonomous transgressive liminal and libidinal space and as a means to an end, deemed and wielded as a locus for resistance and countering, as a battle field and not an independent autonomous entity in its own right. The implied impetus behind Stucley's re-writing of his own version of the Bible, confirms the point at issue: "And by His gentleness, touches her heart, like any maiden rescued from the dragon gratitude stirs in her womb, she becomes to him the possibility of shared oblivion, she sheds all sin, and He experiences the – IRRATIONAL MANIFESTATIONS OF PITY WHICH IS - Tumescence …" (223). As such the female continues to be assimilated as the invisible condition of possibility, the ground on which the struggle is ensued at her expense (see Irigaray, *TS* 32).

Consequently, as underscored above, we should be wary of inflating or over-interpreting the steps taken by Stucley in this regard. Though he supersedes a carnal and more immanent god for a spiritual one, he has not acceded to a (feminine) logic of proximity and an ethics of heteronomy and infinity and remains a domineering male and staunch to sovereign authoritarianism. What diminishes the magnitude and significance of his enterprise of de/re-constructing religion and metaphysics is the fact that his undertaking is prompted by a reactive counter-movement, carried out, out of ressentiment with a sadistic and imperious deity (culminating in delirium and dementia)

and hence remaining bound to and driven by the logic of totality and ontology (though a less transcendental one). Indeed, his embarking on the inverting the metaphysical foundations of religion and logic of relation is primarily propelled by a still metaphysical intention of establishing identity between meaning and being and an inexorable yet blind urge to eradicate or resolve contradictions of a divinely ordered and ordained universe. Therefore, his transgressive act is almost entirely devoid of the element of "self-overcoming" which Barker identifies as a vital characteristic of his catastrophic characters (*Arguments* 57).

Skinner and the Vicissitudes of the Disciplinary-Transgressive Body

In *The Castle* we evidently observe the multivalent roles that the body fulfils. The body features as a site for self-transformation and re-configuration of selfhood, meaning, and sensibility (by Krak, Skinner), and a means/medium in and by which transgression is implemented both metaphysically (by Stucley) and socio-politically (by Skinner); above all, the body transpires as a locus of inter-corporeal proximity, becoming-other, and self-transcendence (Ann). Women establish and launch their egalitarian community by breaking bailiff, God and "cock" and liberating their bodies; and men re-instate their entirely re-formed and re-formulated patriarchy on "body, blood and semen". After the re-establishment of order, Stucley encumbers the priest to restore the body (or "the agonized virility") to the hitherto-incorporeal Christ. Even more significantly, in a moment of agony and inspiration Stucley avows that Christ was relieved of and released from the ordeals that God/Father inflicted upon him only when he discovered Magdalene's womb or body - both as a haven from the distresses foisted by God (the divine) as well as a locus of transgression. Finally, the issued verdict of the court is straightly administered to the body of the convict (Skinner) and the corpse of the victim is enchained to her.

Concerning the cases which are more evidently entangled with discursive issues Foucault's discussion of the dialectical relation between body and discourse is critical to my discussion. In fact, Barker himself refers to Foucault once in his *Arguments for a Theatre* - "We required Michel Foucault to elaborate what most Europeans have always suspected about dark places and speaking, that confession comes easiest in the dark, and that it is vastly more sexually stimulating to tell than to keep silent" (162) - thus, implicitly referring to *Will to Knowledge* in which Foucault elaborates

various "modes of subjectivation" deployed by diverse discourses across history, ranging from ancient Greece through Christianity to modern disciplinary paradigms. One of the concomitant aspects, and principal modes, is the instilling of the hermeneutics of the subject which is also inherent in the process of confession as a means of embedding an internal means of restraint, disciplinary control, and normative identity. Accordingly, Barker proposes the confession box of the Roman Catholic church as "an apposite paradigm for an alternative theatre practice" because it enacts and embodies "[t]he oscillating character of self-revelation, the urge to confess - powerful as the urge to transgress, but complicated by the vertigo of confession itself into exaggeration and unmitigated lying" (162). As is clearly discernible, at variance with Foucault who is primarily preoccupied with the investigation, exposure and geneaological analysis of discursive (knowledge-power) techniques and normative practices of subjectivation of the self[97], what attracts Barker's attention to the confession box is its being potentially an emblematically inter-personal, historically overdetermined and highly dramatically-erotically charged space. To Barker, the confession box is traversed, and intimately associated, with the modes and means of subjectivation, secrecy, eroticism and inter-subjective intimacy, excess of language and imagination, and a place of mutual seduction in which the category of truth is only ostensibly invoked.

[97] In his sweeping survey of various techniques and discourses of subjectivation, ranging from the Lateran Council of 1215 (where the formalisation of the Catholic sacrament of penance was officially announced and established) up to the twentieth-century practice of psychoanalysis, Foucault discerns confession as a "millennial yoke" which has caused the individual's subjection "in both senses of the word". Confession is implemented by "a power that constrains us" *(VS* 60[81]); it proceeds by a "many-sided extortion" *(VS* 64[86]) and, in contrast to the "repressive hypothesis", it has led to 'too much rather than not enough discourse' (ibid.). In Foucault's critical-genealogical account, confession is intimately linked with a certain "hermeneutics of the self" and is thus a highly vigorous and effective technique of individuation which entails the continuous (even interminable) subjection of the individual to interpretation underpinned by an urge to self-introspection and self-discovery and (hence implying an essentialist conception of the self). Such a hermeneutics of the self, as a procedure of subjectivation - is indeed what Foucault calls the "internal ruse of confession" (ibid.), thus fixing the individual to forms of identity which arise from the complex formations of power/knowledge prevailing, variously, in the pastoral power of Christianity and in modern societies (see "About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Two lectures at Dartmouth", *Political Theory*, 21, 2, 1993, 198-227).
Foucault recognizes confession (as an extraction of self-avowal driven by a will to know the intimate truth of the individual's desire) as one of the pivotal components of the apparatus/discourse of modern Western *scientia sexualis* (contrasted with the Eastern *ars erotica*). The technique of confession, in Foucault's "broad historical perspective" (*VS* 67 [90]), has since the beginning of the thirteenth century become "one of the main rituals we rely on for the production of truth" (*VS* 58 [78]). Scrutinizing the status of sexuality in the modern era - with its injunction to "tell everything" leading to the "discursive explosion" *(VS* 17[25]) - Foucault acutely detects and accentuates the indelible link between speech (more strictly, true speech) and sexuality and traces the "great subjugation" of sex to discourse *(VS,* 21[30]), a subjugation which has paved the way for the parallel subjugation of sex to power: "everything having to do with sex [must pass] through the endless mill of speech" *(VS* 21 [30]).

Body occupies a prominent place in Foucault's later work; in his genealogical approach, he demonstrates the subtle yet substantial ways in which body, knowledge and power are intertwined: "the task of genealogy has been to show that the body is also directly involved in a political field... Power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks" (*Discipline and Punishment* 25). In fact, he undertakes to delineate the ways bodies are constructed, schematized, semanticized and differentiated under diverse categories such as gender, status, as vectors of power: "the body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas); the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantive unity)" (Foucault 1977, 148). He scrupulously pursues the ways in/through which the body is subjected to the "anatomo-metaphysical" and "techno-political" registers[98], and, then, is invested in the relations of power, endowed with a discursive position and rendered the object of knowledge and the target of exertion of power, as a consequence of which the "docile body" is produced. Foucault, in an analogous categorization and in the complexity, discerns and articulates two major registers in the discursive production of the docile citizen since the nineteenth century. It is within this double framework that I would like to locate the power relations and disciplinary techniques wielded throughout *The Castle* particularly by Stucley: both bio-politics (his attempt to "increase the yield of the demense", and exploiting the labour power of people by manipulatively invoking religious beliefs in collusion with Nailer for precipitating the building the castle by coercing people to work) and anatomo-politics: torturing Skinner, chaining the corpse of Holiday to Skinner's body as the penal-juridical verdict, and the erection of the castle.[99]

To Barker, the body is invariably implicated and intermeshed in the invidious mechanisms of knowledge (enlightenment) and (systematic) power (such as capitalism). He in his works

[98] Here is Foucault extended distinction between the two in conjunction with their socio-historical roots: "The classical age discovered the body as object and target of power. It is easy enough to find signs of the attention then paid to the body—to the body that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skillful and increases its forces. The great book of Man-the-Machine was written simultaneously on two registers; the *anatomico-metaphysical register*, of which Descartes wrote the first pages and which the physicians and philosophers continued, and the *techno-political register*, which was constituted by a whole set of regulations and by empirical and calculated methods relating to the army, the school and the hospital, for controlling or correcting the operations of the body. These two registers are quite distinct, since it was a question, on the one hand, of submission and use and, on the other, of functioning and explanation: there was a useful body and an intelligible body. And yet there are points of overlap from one to the other. La *Mettrie's L'Homme-machine* is both a materialist reduction of the soul and a general theory of dressage, at the centre of which reigns the notion of 'docility' which joins the analysable body to the manipulable body" (Foucault 1979, 136).

[99] See Foucault 1980, 139.

explores and exposes to scrutiny the volatile and varying ways, in which the body is appropriated, commodified, objectified, manipulated and utilized as the immediate point of application of the relations of power. The body is also discerned as the place of convergence, contestation, conflict and interplay of diverse discursive and non-discursive forces by him: “The body as the conventional ground for controlled desire is one of the undeclared cornerstones of the state” (145). However, the body does not solely is depicted as passively and receptively susceptible to external processes and forces; Barker is keenly attentive to the regenerative, transformative and transgressive capacities of the body and calls the body not only "the source of politics” but also “the source of hope" (qtd. in Ian Rabey 174). Furthermore, if we subject Barker's trajectory to scrutiny we observe that body, incrementally and cumulatively, accrues more significance and new dimensions and potentialities in his works, substantiating the individual’s body as his essential field of being and displaying it as an inexhaustible, ever-expanding, multi-dimensional and often recondite resource for action, interaction and speculation.

Such an attitude towards the body (corporeality and sensibility) aesthetic, ethical in terms of desire and eroticism pervade and are evidently discernible in *Possibilities, The Europeans, The Love of a Good Man, Victory, Women Beware Women,* and *The Bite of the Night*.

The Castle Reconfigured

In Act 2 scene 3, Krak, while the rest abandon the stage, has been congealed into contemplation on the foreboding emergence of the fortress and its engineer’s mind: a conundrum to him. Ann arrives pregnant – as will transpire later, with catastrophe - and entreats him to elope with her. But he rebuffs her, insisting that tyranny and authority are ineluctable and almost ubiquitous.

At the very outset of the next scene we observe the realization of Irigaray’s diagnostic assertion, the hysteric reaction or response of women to the oppressive and repressive treatment of the disciplinary state. In the opaque ambience, we detect that "the things falling" (244) are the pregnant women who are flinging themselves off the castle walls in multitudes. In effect we witness that Ann's suicide has turned out to be as catastrophic and reverberating as was anticipated, and has triggered off a pandemic suicide among the female: the “rain of women”.

Irigaray in her trenchant critique of the present patriarchal logic of the dominant paradigm maintains that the sole positions left to a woman in the current order of discourse are either to recede to silence or to resort to hysteria as a miming or mimic behaviour (*SE* 71-2; see also Moi 135). Irigaray's treatment of hysteria is double-edged; she perceives it both as a pathological and an enunciatory behaviour. She recognizes "a revolutionary potential" in hysteria. To her, the hysteric even in her paralysis, exhibits a potential for disquieting gestures and disruptive desires. She discerns the spasmodic expressions and discharges of the hysteric as "a movement of revolt and refusal, a desire for/of the living mother which would be *more than a reproductive body* in the pay of the polis, a living, loving woman" (*Irigaray Reader*:47-48; italics mine). On the other hand, this pain can be deemed as the resistance of the flesh, as insinuating the excess or the residue, the overflow or the seething undercurrent -the 'elsewhere' - of the hysteric female subject which articulates itself in corporeal symptoms. In this interpretation of hysteria, the female flesh resists and repels the images of itself which do not correspond with its psycho-somatic morphology and patterns of desire.

Nailer unavailingly menaces the women with persecution and punishment on the Day of Reckoning, and commands the incarceration and manacling of those women who possess a protruding belly: "They must be locked away. All Women who are pregnant. Chained at wrist and ankle… they bear our future in their innards and they kill it. In the stall. By what right! All women big about the middle, lock up!" (245). Simultaneously, Krak, consternated, roves among the crushed corpses of women, poring over his intercourse with Ann and attempting to bore through it.

In the wake of the establishment of the castle on the hill and the consequent contraction of the feminine/female by the masculine, Act 2 commences with Krak, soliloquizing on the way everything regarding the erection and fortification of the castle has evidently gone awry and more distressed that the castle, owing to Stucley's implacable demands for extension, is exceedingly growing into "a shapeless, indefinite mass" - and we remember Skinner extolling the "lovely shapelessness" (203) of female sexual organs. Krak has attempted to convince Stucley that the castle is already indomitable with three walls; he, however, does not relent and in the grip of a grim paranoid dread, insists on the escalation of more walls: "A fifth wall I predict will be necessary, and a sixth essential, to protect the fifth, necessitating the erection of twelve flanking

towers" (231). Then Krak, with the present and imminent state of the castle in view, proceeds to point out the key idiosyncrasy of the castle which foregrounds its ambiguity and affinity with the feminine component: "The castle is by definition, not definitive…" (231).

The castle at its later stages of development in its assumption of manifold facets, permeated with irreducible ambiguity epitomizes the feminine element in the very kernel of the play. Its physical and architectural quirks evince its seductive nature; it is both veiling and unveiling; the ups are downs and the downs are ups. Thus the castle, akin to the feminine, proves to partake of and incarnate equal chiasmaticity, ambiguity, equivocity and undecidability. The intrusive emergence of this cataclysmic feature prompts Stucley to pursue its entrenchment more inexorably and to corroborate its masculine character by adding more walls such as "the wall of morality" (232). Stucley's inadvertent act of naming the wall bears witness to there being a parallel relation between the castle, morality and male dominant discourse and hence how ideology and morality are inextricably intertwined; they must be fortified parallel-like as correlates: "Listen, I think morality is also bricks, the fifth wall is the wall of morals, did you think I could leave that untouched?" (Ibid). Ironically, Stucley's move leads to the formation of a more elusive fluid, slippery, in short a more feminine, castle apparent in its manifoldness, multi-layeredness and amorphousness. These idiosyncrasies endow the castle with a more tactile quality than visual, which can evidently be associated with female carnal and genital morphology and femininity; though it cannot be restricted to this dimension.[100]

The Moment of Contactile Aesthethics and Its Ramifications

In this section we reach and broach the crux of the theoretical part of the argument, as indicated above, which is predicated on my proposed thesis of Con/tactile Aesth/ethics which I have

[100] In the same vein, diagnosing the inherence and persistence of the obliteration of the female/feminine and the consequences of its re-insertion or restoration, Irigaray claims that the patriarchal order of discourse is grounded in matricide. She impugns Freud's assertion that it was the murder of the father as the socio-symbolic originary act that founded the primal community or horde. She undertakes to founder the archaeological cornerstone of mytho-historical patriarchal paradigm by deploying a symptomatic and genealogical critique unearthing a more original origin (244). Thus, the tendency exhibited by patriarchal texts to terrorize feminine corporeality is coalesced with an anxious yearning to demonize the primary locus of procreation itself arising from a phobic dread of "retreating into the original matrix" ('matrix', in Latin means "womb").

developed with respect to some recurrent patterns in some of Barker's plays, based on which I intend to subject the indicated plays by Barker to analysis. In Contactile Aesthethics, *aesth/ethics* is defined in terms of (not always but an often) "spontaneous" responsivity to heteronomy, proximity with alterity and (inter)carnal transitivism (see *PP* 145, 148) of corporeal schemas, figural patterns and affective traces (in other terms, the non-synchronous non-symmetrical becoming of the self and the other in the aforesaid process of transitivism)[101]. It should be underscored that all three characteristics are concretized in a primarily con/tactile or non-visual mode or relation. Furthermore "spontaneity" implies a willed creativity in contrast to Levinas's radical passivity, receptivity and exposure; and hence it enhances the aesthetic role of the self and demonstrates that the eventuation of such a moment of carnal transfiguration and intercorporeal transmission entails a volitional gesture by the individual. It should be noted that my advanced thesis of contractibility of the streaks of self and alterity issues from the very essence of Merleau-Ponty's ontology of relatedness and nature of the flesh which is characterized by chiasmaticity, porosity, reversibility and divergence (*VI* 138-9, 266).

To distil it, it is a trans-corporeal inscription and a corporeal in-vestment in the moment of proximal relation and interaction between self and the other. In Con/tactile Aesth/ethics, the Other is never punctual s/he is always ineluctably eventual. More important is the fact that in Con/tactile Aesth/ethics there is no responsibility involved but responsivity, or to put it more strictly responsibility is defined in terms of responsivity.[102] Hence to justify my philosophical method and approach in this study in relation to the female genital (and the feminine) and its possibility of transplantation and assimilation, I posit 'cunt' as primarily morphological (yet not dismissive of

[101] By juxtaposing aesthetics and ethics I intend to highlight and demonstrate the way Barker, notwithstanding the prominent affinities he shares with Levinassian ethics at some certain points, diverges from that mode. I intended to underscore the fact that these two moments (the aesthetic moment of self-overcoming, self-transfiguration and self-fabrication and the ethical moment of exposure to the Other, impassive affectivity and responsivity) though not simultaneous, coincident and/or symmetrical but are concomitant and coexistent. In Barker, moments of radical passivity, which is one of the pivotal characteristics of the ethical moment in Levinas (see *Radical Passivity* 1-10 and also 31-50), rarely occur and in the encounters that take place between the self and the other a strong trace of spontaneity is invariably manifest. And more significantly these momentous encounters with the Other are starkly marked by self-overcoming, self-traversing and self-transcendence. In "aesthetics of the body", the crucial element is the difference, the divergence, the slippage, and disincorporation or the "écart" (VI: 211) it incorporates, which is subversive, evocative, inspirational, profuse with radical possibility and hence aesthetic.

[102] Thus the aforesaid aesth/ethic relation takes place in an interstitial space, an interface, a third dimension, an entre-deux (Merleau-Ponty, 1968:146) pertaining to and arising from both and neither of them and yet irreducible to either. What is noteworthy is that, dehiscence, efflorescence and connaissaince (1968: 263) transpire in this dimension.

the anatomical[103]) as the incarnation of a corporeal schema, illustrative of the irreducible ambiguity and indeterminacy of the flesh and finally as a figural manifestation of a chiasmatic openness. Furthermore, all the aforesaid traits are intensified and enhanced due to its being the emblem of and hence intensely invested with desire and eroticism[104].

The (ob)scene in which the moment of proximity between Ann and Krak eventuates (of which we are apprised analeptically) is one in which Ann seeks to impart to Krak the exigency of undergoing the splitting pains of exposure and self-transcendence: "It is you who need to be reborn. I will be your midwife. Through the *darkness*, down the *black* canal-" (35, italics mine). By drawing his attention to a different mode of existence and relation, Ann approaches him as an erotic proximity in a nocturnal time-space which cannot be comprehended in a rational light but must be apprehended in a "carnal light"[105]. She proffers to act as his midwife to assist him to exceed his death-obsessed self. Although initially, despite all her unremitting efforts, he clings to his coil yet he finally yields to "the amorous exchange" (see Whitford 165-8).

Hence a radical feminist's objection that here woman is once more conceived of and treated as a means to an end, as a ground for his transcendence or as a Copula for his Ek-stasis is untenable; as it is a self-willed, belated process "without a preconceived goal" (*EP* 32-3) but above all as it inevitably leads to his immanent de-position and dispossession, his trans-substantiation by the

[103] See Luce Irigaray's 'Women's Exile', in: *Ideology and Consciousness*, vol. 1 (1977) 1 64.

[104] Diverging from and contesting Irigaray's argument that being born invariably entails being born into a form or morphology of one peculiar sex ('A Natal Lacuna', 13) -which, to me, as I will explain later, is indeed redolent of biological determinism and essentialism- I subscribe to Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze and Kristeva in this regard and postulate the fluidity of form and the individuality of the two sides of the evental encounter or ethical relation rather than their sex. I maintain that morphology of the sensible (I conceive of sensibility in terms of partial-proximal signification and incorporation, here.) is not biologically determined and clinched, on the contrary, it is essentially fluid, malleable and impressionable always in process/on trial, continuously amenable to transitivism (*PP* 145,148), transmission and transubstantiation in the throes of the proximal encounter and carnal intimacy with the Other informed by anarchical sensibility of the chiasmatic relationship.

This laden morphology and its implications are in accordance with the argument in Con/Tactile Aesth/Ethics, in which ethics is defined in terms of proximity with alterity (the Other), transitivism of corporeal schemas, figural patterns and affective traces. It must be noted that my proposed thesis of inter-affectivity and contractibility of femininity and/or patterns of alterity issues from and pivots on the very essence of Merleau-Ponty's ontology of relatedness and nature of the flesh which are characterized by inter-corporeality, porosity, reversibility and divergence (*VI* 138-9, 266). Hence to justify my philosophical method and approach in this study in relation to the female genital and the feminine and its possibility of transplantation and assimilation, I posit 'cunt' as the incarnation of a corporeal schema, illustration of the ambiguity and indeterminacy of the flesh and finally as a figural manifestation of an irreducible chiasmatic openness. Furthermore, all the aforesaid traits are intensified and enhanced due to its being the emblem of and hence intensely invested with desire and eroticism

[105] For a detailed philosophical explanation of the notion of carnal light see Vasseleu 40-49.

apprehension of liberating potentialities of the abject (inter-corporeality): “In Shit I Find Peace Is It!.” (241). As regards Ann, it is in an intercorporeal proximity with him that she enters a liminal-libidinal space in which she is also *re-figured* as an actual transgressive lover not only by contravening the sacrament of marriage but more significantly by on the one hand, repudiating the procreative/reproductive imperative dominant in phallogocentric discourse as their intercourse has been *anal* as Krak in consternation asserts: “Cunt you lend or rent, but arse you have to will ... true ring of marriage ... brown button of puckered muscularity ... the sacramental stillness born of hanging between pain and ecstasy ...” (Ibid); but also by breaching the total and autonomous body of phallogocentric mind (as embodied in Krak above others) and contractarian morality through the act. Thus they enter a choratic-chiasmatic space – “a womb of ideality” (*EP* 77) – a womb which no longer pertains exclusively to a woman but which emerges in/from the intertwining of the folds of the flesh in which corporeal schemas, figural patterns and affective traces are excessively transcribed: a moment of con/tactile aesth/ethics.

Therefore Ann’s fecundity, as discussed at the outset, is neither solely sexual nor spiritual. Her fecundity is virtually an aesth/ethic fecundity; a simultaneous self-birthing and other-birthing, a simultaneous unfolding of an interiority and unfolding to/enfolding of an exteriority, at once psychic and somatic. Her maternity finds its figural (both literal and metaphorical) fulfillment in giving birth her relation to Krak and subsequently to Krak through intermediary de/formative rhythms of a con/tactile relation. Thus, she intensely approaches Levinas’s form of desire: "Desire for the absolutely Other" (*TI* 34) This is an unstinting response (preceding any demand) to the Other and bearing their force and trace as an irreducible, concrete entity. The desire for the Other is beyond need and the egocentric space, and unattached to my own enjoyment. She overcomes his invincible discourse by the discourse of intercourse.

The first flickers of the cataclysmic consequences of this encounter are almost immediately evident in Krak’s conduct and new course of action in the penultimate scene when Stucley arrives distraught and daunted by the morass-like mass the castle has lapsed into (exacerbated by Krak’s treacherous trading of diagrams with the enemy and the looming of a rival adversarial fortress) to possibly castigate or even convict him, yet is confronted with Krak’s obsessive mental detachment and sensual absorption in drawing female genitalia in “twenty seven versions” (242). Thus he harangues: “DON’T DRAW FEMALE BODIES. I’M TALKING! This is a crisis, isn't it?” Then

even he is momentarily swayed from his paranoiac course exclaiming: "–IS THAT MY WIFE'S BITS –I wouldn't know them – what man would…" (243).

At the end of Scene 3, as the prisoners are led away by Batter, Krak and Skinner are left alone on the stage. Skinner, carelessly begins biting an apple, when, abruptly Krak falls to her knees, prostrating himself before her, avowing his faith in the female body:

Krak: The Book of Cunt.

Skinner: What book is that?

Krak: The Book of Cunt says all men can be saved. (241)

This passage starkly marks one of the hallmarks of the play where solipsistic rationality with its claim to autonomy yields to the seductive wisdom of carnality and inter-corporeal proximity but of course in the wrong place. Krak begins to foster qualms concerning the credit and value of science with which he has felt such kinship even to the point of identification. Telling, nonetheless, is that what comes as an irresistible impetus for his alter-ation is not nature, but his inter-corporeal proximity with Ann and his consequent fascination with the fuzzy logic of the feminine.

Another point that corroborates my proposition that in the play the female sexual organ should not necessarily be deemed tantamount to the feminine element (in this play in particular) yet must be reckoned irrespective of one's sex[106] can be Krak's gesture. Formerly Krak had raged at Ann: "And you say, come under my skirt. Under my skirt, oblivion and compensation, shoot your anger in my bowel, CUNT ALSO IS A DUNGEON!" (233). This remark by Krak exposes the existence of other latent strains in his apparently monolithic mentality which evince themselves when he refuses to attach a salvific value to the female genital organ and idealize/idolize it. Thus when he recapitulates his misapprehension of Ann's proposition that: "The Book of the Cunt says all men can be saved", he does not hesitate to qualify it by contending, "not true" (241). As such he admonishes that one must eschew turning an innate biological feature into a surrogate transcendental signified - "to worship it out of ignorance" (203), what men used to do as indicated and repudiated very early in the play by Skinner. Krak's reference to "the Book of the Cunt" as

[106] To put it more clearly, one does not already contain or possess the feminine, but contrarily the feminine as a quality, can be sought, transmitted and/or attained by both sexes.

another transcendental signified (see Kristeva, in Marks and de Courtivron, 1981, 166) and in keeping with the same phallogocentric logic calls to mind Critchley's relevant discussion. This fetishization of the textual corpus/corporeality (and the corporeal text in the case of the play) as a truth-containing text can be construed as a perverted version of bibliocentrism which, as Critchley argues, is in effect logocentrism (52).

Now confounded by his failure to define and confine the female organ within visible and measurable dimensions, he asks: "Where's cunt's geometry? The thing has no angles! And no measure, neither width nor depth, how can you trust what has no measure" (241). Here, he implicitly deems the morphological indeterminacy of the organ (illustrating its epistemological and cognitive indefiniteness) as a menacing aspect of it; and such a recognition acts as a testimony to the fact and reason that the organ is construed as a threat, foil or counterforce to the phallomorphic rationality by him and other members of patriarchy.

Another compelling testimony surfaces in Krak's statement where he in a parallel movement strives to capture the seemingly chaotic, yet in fact chiasmatic, logic of (inter)corporeality by dint of ratiocination, awkwardly endeavoring to pin it down in terms of mathematics and geometry while it slips his sieve of science. As he confesses, Ann drowns "argument in her spreading underneath" (Ibid). He then proceeds to the moment of subversion of his subjective agency in their erotic proximity: "She pulled me down. I did not pull her. She pulled me. In the shadow of the turret, in the apex of the angle with the wall, in the slender crack of ninety-nine degrees, she, using the ledge to fix her heels, levered her parts over me" (Ibid). Here as it is evidently observable his description of the sensual experience of the scene of seductive intercourse is still couched in mathematical terms. The excerpt indeed illustrates the last spasms of a wriggling rationality, entangled within the folds of flesh, trying to come to terms with its unrationalizable materiality. In Krak's own desperate words, as "shoes fell, drawers fell" his mental and bodily armors[107] dissolved and fell as well. Though his ego-boundaries have been breached he is still brittly bound by the grid of specular economy and isomorphic logic.

Subsequently, speculative[108] sketches jerk out of his pen as he is essaying to specularize, reflecting on the visually volatile and elusive dimensions of female genitalia. This failure, to draw

[107] A term in Reichian psychology, for further reading see Staunton 1-31
[108] Note the implications of the terms as elaborated by Irigaray (see Irigaray 1977:64. See also *SO* 27).

our hint from Irigaray, can be attributed to the emphatic equation of vision and knowledge inherent in phallogocentric discourse which also accounts for the elision of differences in sexualities in conjunction with the inscription of that monological sexual identity that depends entirely on the possession of the phallus. Irigaray argues that the predominance of the visual and of the discrimination of a prominent and perspicuous form, to be identified as an erogenous zone is particularly foreign to female eroticism: "Woman takes pleasure more from touching than from looking" (*TS*, 26). As such, Irigaray poses the possibility of a more tactile and chiasmatic relation than specular vision: "Autoaffection … not auto-representation is the mark of female sexuality" (Jay 535). One must note that this is accommodated in a context of woman's entry into a dominantly scop(ophil)ic economy in which the female genitalia is recognized as a hole, a crack or a lacuna. Consequently, contending that such phallomorphism is informed by the logic of identity, unity, singularity, she proceeds to beckon to the functional consequences of this mode of perception: "(The/a) woman is always already in a state of anamorphosis in which the figure becomes fuzzy" (*SO*, 230). Here, the remarkable similarity between the architectural sketch of the castle and the structural logic and pattern of the female body (organ) is once more brought to the fore. The castle, which from the outset was planned and purported to assume a singular and definitive shape, gradually accrues walls cumulatively, crumpling into a morass or mass of maze-like strongholds, so much so that the vehemently sought idiosyncrasy defeats its own purpose. In consequence, "The castle" becomes "by definition not definitive" (compare Irigaray's description of female genitalia and mode of pleasure in *TS* 28-30).[109]

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[109] Though here Krak is fascinated with the whole morphology and a-logic of the organ and his mental attention is not solely concentrated on and confined to the labial facet of the organ, and Irigaray's argument is incompatible with the fundamental premise or of Con/Tactile Aesth/Ethics (the presumption of the precedence of a state of polymorphous perversity), nevertheless, there are notable convergences and striking affinities which render a correlative and comparative reading of the text with Irigaray's notion of two lips worth conducting and elucidating.

To Irigaray, to be born is to be born into morphology, and this morphology contains, implies and fosters ontological, epistemological and ethical corollaries. Whitford points to one of these dimensions when she states: "Irigaray wants to restore the link between epistemology and ethics. I don't think it would be epistemology without ethics is deadly (149). Furthermore it must be added that morphology and identity are deeply implicated in constitution of the imaginary. Irigaray, by conceiving primary matter as formed, does not only take issue with the philosophical idea of primary matter as a-morph, she also diverges from the Freudian conception of the new born child as inhabiting a state of 'polymorphous perversity' - which entails an implicit rejection of the corresponding idea that the new-born's polymorphous perversity can be molded into any form. This invariably entails a self-defeating result: the rebuttal of all morphological identities as malleable, flexible, the consequence is the renunciation of reaching totality of being all.

Irigaray's proposed image for the female has been read and construed in various ways by her critics and commentators - as a discursive strategy, as a healing metaphor, as a struggle concept, a metaphor for the metonymy,

Thus, what renders the female sexual organ indomitable, to Krak's mind, is its deficiency in definite angles, penetrable points and measurable contours: its diffuse figural pattern. Here, however, taking the cue from *The Castle*, a critical point must be underscored, and that is, female genitalia should not to be treated as an a-morphous phenomenon; its indefinite and indeterminate form emanates not from its being amorphous but of a expressly chaotic- chiasmatic morphology. It does not merely arise from its physical features (as I emphasized earlier there is an intense analogy between ontology, morphology and psychology) but issues from and is intensified by its being heavily invested with desire, heteronomy and eroticism.

After some time, though he has despaired of capturing the ruling geometrical principles and the underlying architectural foundation of the feminine figure, Krak is so carnally obsessed with his eventual moment of proximity with Ann that he cannot cease rehearsing the scene:

> Krak: She undressed me... (They look at him.) I lay there thinking ... what is she... what does she ... undressed me and ... (Pause) what is the word?
>
> Batter: Fucked?
>
> Krak: Fucked! (*He laughs, as never before*.) Fucked! (Pause) went over me... the flesh ... with such... inch by inch with such ... (Pause) What is the word?
>
> Cant: Desire. (He stares at her, then throwing himself at her).
>
> Krak: Show me. (245)

Thus Krak becomes a thought that "thinks more than it thinks" and thereby approximates the state of desire (see Levinas, Collected Papers 56). The missing words (*fucked* and *desire*) reveal the corresponding missing or inadequate corporeal perceptions, *as heteronomous affections* (and not sexual needs or inclinations), in him as the representative of the phallogocentric discourse. Perhaps the most crucial point regarding the above passage and the foregoing account in which Krak depicted his advent with Ann, is that it is not shown on the stage and is solely retrospectively recounted in fragments by Krak. Rather than observing the scene on the stage, we have to *imagine*

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as a schematic or symbolic deployment of anatomy, as a deconstructive concept and some others (see Whitford 170-4). Two lips, however, are not restricted to those of female genital organ but include upper lips of the mouth as organs of speech, moulding and shaping the male genital lips of man and woman intertwined in a kiss (see Canters and Jantzen 106-9) and thus figurate an articulate corporeal language.

the scene through Krak's *figural language*; a material language whose breathless body is riddled with lacunae and ruptures and a narrative beset with hiatuses in its linear nexus, with moments in which the symbolic organization of words is interrupted and overwhelmed with semiotic flows illustrating how *the aesth/ethic* moment of carnal intimacy defies representation.[110]

In fact, this is the first time his language dissolves into shreds. Here we vividly observe a highly elliptical language displaying his fumbling for the correct word(s) or the symmetrically reflective expression. This fragmented language is indicative of the emergent fragmentation of his former subjectivity/identity.[111] Krak, in his confrontation with fluidity of the flesh and irrationality of desire, is still endeavoring to ward off the inimical encroachment of proximal eroticism, and restrain it under a rubric of rational rendition. Then in an appeal to Cant, he importunes her to try to embody desire for him. She nonchalantly attempts to impress him yet fails and bolts out:

> Krak: Not it …
>
> Cant: Trying but I...
>
> Kant: Not it!
>
> Cant: Can't just go-
>
> Krak: NOT IT! NOT IT! (245)

Eventually he desists from his endeavor to see it in the rational light[112] and tries to perceive it in a new light, that is, carnal light - light of non-savoir. He, subsequently, in the wake of his conversion, taps into new impulsive flows of the semiotic, and forgoing his unflinching adherence to the intellect of the genius, exposes his head for the soldiers to split it into halves with their axes: "Slice it round the top and SSSSSSS the great stench of *dead* language SSSSSSS the great stench of *dead* elegance *dead* manners SSSSSSS articulation and explanation *dead* all *dead*" (246, italics mine).

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[110] See Lyotard's *Discourse and Figure* 16-9, 211-13; and Barthes' *Pleasure of the Text* 55-7.

[111] In this regard Kristeva cogently argues: "In a culture where the speaking subjects are conceived of as masters of their speech, they have what is called, a phallic position. The fragmentation of language in a text calls into question the very posture of this mastery" (1981, 166).

[112] See Wyschogrod: 118–19; also see Derrida's "Violence and Metaphysics" in *Writing and Difference*.

Here his being riven between sibilant release of semiotic pulsions and an effort at illocutionary appeal palpably evidences how the newly-assimilated feminine sensibility has affected and infected his language. As Lyotard argues: "Desire does not speak, it disrupts the order of language" (*DF:* 239). This "influx of the death drive" (*RPL* 50), occurs as a dialectical yet violent confrontation between two contradictory movements, and is intensely "acute and dramatic" (47). The text manifestly exemplifies what Kristeva calls a "feminine language" (*RPL* 69-81; see also Cavallaro 82), a language invariably corporeal, abject and fluid. Kristeva's notion of feminine language - as opposed to Irigaray's Parler Femme which she claims to be exclusively bound up with female body and sexuality - indicates the gender of the text, speech, or language rather than the gender of the speaker or author[113]. Here, the semiotic onslaught evinces itself as "the corruption of Meaning" (37), ruptures the thetic, and "splits it, fills it with empty spaces" (69) multiplying the divisions to operate an "infinitization" (56) of meaning. In addition to the staccato rhythms, the turbulent sonority, and insurgent pace of language, the most symptomatic clue to the mode and status of such a language is the lack of verbs and conjunctions (logical connections) in his utterances.[114]

Kristeva, in her critical revaluation of the field, insists that the prevailing assumption of Western thought, according to which language as an abstract sign system produces unified rational subjects, must be interrogated. She observes that in this regard, it should be heeded that "syntax" plays a substantial role in stabilizing language and consequently subjectivity/identity by subjecting speech to rigid and inflexible rules (*RPL* 270).[115] Thus *feminine language* is rather the kind of language which destabilizes the rigid rules of the symbolic, instigates intensities and multiplicities into the thetic interstices the monolithic corpus of its linguistic structure and, by extension, in that

[113] Kristeva argues: "her language in which she goes off in all directions ... Within language, however, the terms of these oppositions are "permutable" (55) and "reversible" (54).

[114] The subject in process resulting from this crisis will therefore correspond to a new reality, which is, for Kristeva, "the most intense moment of rupture and renewal."19 Subject and society are thus entwined in a spiral choreography of contradiction and change.20 For Kristeva it is the signifying body that articulates the play or movement between the subject and the symbolic. It is the body which inscribes the material contradiction between these domains. She writes: "For what you take to be a shattering of language is really a shattering of the body."

[115] As she emphasizes: "syntax displaces and represents, within the homogeneous element of language, the thetic break separating the signifier from what was heterogeneous to it" (55).

of patriarchy[116]. Feminine language manifests itself in rhythmical patterns, fluid structures and musical sequences which bring into play what Kristeva recognizes as "unconscious".

Accordingly, this passage, in its explicit disruption of syntax and infusing the affective charge of the body into the utterance/text, effects the "transfusion of living body into language" (Oliver xx); or even more strictly: "[the] trans-syntactic inscription of emotion" (PH 204). His former language, syntactically rigid and semantically rigorous, thaws and is submerged in the eruptions of and interruptions of bodily drives. And this should be ascribed to his encounter with an "untidy, asyntactic, pre-semantic bodiliness" of Ann (Elam, "In What Chapter of His Bosom?" 14). The descriptive term: *asyntactic*, is a crucial term which helps unravel the latent changes in Krak's mode of subjectivity and existence. Given the foregoing explanations, *asyntactic* can be construed to designate a drastic transgression of or deviation from orthodox syntax as the dominant ordering principle of discourse and discursive self - as syntactic arrangement by definition entails a strict mode of structuration under a regulative-normative rubric among which is a hierarchical binarism, the polarization of entities into subject-object and/or predicate. Hence, to elude the prescriptive and isomorphic strictures of the aforesaid mode, this (non)syntax strains towards the accommodation of another mode of relating involved - proximity - and its correlates by remolding itself in its terms.

Now, Irigaray's elaboration of a feminine syntax (the notion she advances as one of the indispensable constituents of an ethical relation) might serve to elucidate more extensively the implications of the issue at stake; she expounds: "In that syntax there would no longer be either subject or object, oneness would no longer be privileged, there would no longer be proper meanings, proper names, proper attributes … Instead that syntax would involve nearness, proximity but in such an extreme form that it would preclude any distinction of identities, any establishment of ownership, thus any form of appropriation" (*TS* 134). This *proximal syntax* constitutes a threshold space for a more material signification and relation informed by chiasmatic implication, complicity and contamination and is recalcitrant to both dualism/polarism and identity-propriety (see also Bataille, *Inner Experience* 37). Consequently, taking Kristeva's

[116] Hinting at the potentially revolutionary capacity of such a mode of language, she says: "To the extent that any activity resists the symbolic (or in the case of semiotic signifying, occupies it in a hit and run fashion) it is revolutionary" (1981, 166).

argument as evidence, we can conclude that such a fundamental de-formation at the level of language betokens a profound trans-formation at the premises of Krak's subjectivity, identity and sense of self: "linguistic changes constitute changes in the status of the subject – his relation to the body, to others, and to objects" (1984, 15). And this testifies to the manner of Ann's mode of ethical being (namely, schizonomadic becoming, heteronomy and proximity) and the eventful moment of con/tactile aesth/ethics with Krak culminates in the upheaval of the phallogocentric discourse and a nascent formation of a different mode of relation and subjectivity.

At the end of the play we witness the dissolution of dichotomies and collapse of antithetical entities through a gesture towards a synthetic reconciliation. Two chief male members of the former patriarchal system, Nailer and Batter, come up with an immensely alluring proposition to Skinner: the overthrow of the "Church of Christ the Erect" and the foundation of a "new church": "The Holy Congregation of the Wise Womb" (245). Though at first glance such a concession as well as the conjunction of wisdom and womb, the intelligible and the sensible, by the members of patriarchy can be reckoned a conspicuous achievement; however, there lies a furtive menace behind it: valorization of womb as the originary and unitary source of all meaning, plenitude and authority; a disguised attempt to stabilize and institutionalize the feminine once more as conceived and determined by the phallogocentric discourse. The fact is that in the wake of the catastrophic fall of the male body (the castle) they gravitate towards (a fragment of) female body (i.e., womb) and seek to assimilate and solidify its fluidity, motility and alterity by turning it into a centralized body. Such a movement entails the consecration, hence conservation, of the feminine, and hence annexing it as a prescribed discursive position. Nailer propounds the doctrinal rudiments and scriptural foundations of the creed: "Christ, abhorring the phallus, foreswore his maleness, chose womanly ways. Scripture in abundance for all this" (245). It is worth quoting the rest of their conversation in full:

Listening to their repartee-like conversation is illuminating:

> Nailer: […] We acknowledge the uniquely female relationship with the origin of life, the irrational but superior consciousness located in-
>
> Skinner: Sod wombs -

Nailer: Do listen, please (Pause. He proceeds.) The special sensitivity of woman to the heart-beat of the earth — Romans, VIII, verses 9 to -

Skinner: He does go on -

Nailer: 17, which hitherto has held no special place in doctrine but which henceforward will be -

Skinner: **Palaver Of Dissimulators**!

Nailer: The foundation of the edict **Let There Be Womanly Times**! (247)

The fulfilled and fully developed form of such propositional doctrine is highly liable to lapse into either the phallic mother or the Cult of Virgin Mary. The cult of Virgin Mary, as Kristeva postulates, served to absorb and harness the economy of the maternal to the patriarchal paradigm and the Law of Father:

> the representation of virgin motherhood appears to crown the efforts of a society to reconcile the social remnants of matrilinearism and the unconscious needs of primary narcissism on the one hand, and on the other hand the requirements of a new society based on exchange and before long on increased production, which require the contribution of the superego and rely on the symbolic paternal legacy. ("Stabat Mater" 167)

The phallic mother, on the other hand, is in effect the converse female version of Phallus or phallocentrism. It is the imaginary double of the masculine or the fetishized feminine for the masculine, which turns out to sustain and secure the phallogocentric symbolic economy even more firmly. As Mary Daly strongly alerts other feminist theorists, the image of the phallic mother represents a real threat to feminist struggle. She argues that as far as women promote such a conception or cause and aspire towards it, they remain "boxed into the father's house of mirrors, merely responding to the images projected/reflected by the Possessors" (47).

Skinner though initially, lured by the prospect of retaliation, accepts the offer and pounces upon the keys, avowing revenge on her violators and refusing stoicism and meek mutism, yet in a

moment of self-reflection – probably triggered in light of her recognition of the futility of oppositional politics (in comparison with that of proximal-deconstructive) and also sensing her own identification with authoritarian power - in a derisive tone impugns their deeply suspicious and redolent gesture and refuses to collaborate with them. Her acute recognition of this point coupled with her deep rancour and resentment towards womb lead her to regard such a prospect of "reconciliation and oblivion" as deceptive and spurious and at best vain and unviable. The parley between Krak and Skinner forebodes the imminent demolition of the castle and the fact that even destruction requires "drawing". The decline of the castle and transformation in the attitude of formerly extremist characters ostensibly seems to be the aftermath of Stucley's downfall and Krak's conversion. These occurrences, nevertheless, are in fact the repercussions of Ann's nomadic, heteronomous and inter-corporeal (in a seducto-somatic vein) style of relationality, desire and existence. At the end, Skinner's rumination on the decline of both ideal feminine and ideal masculine community is interrupted by dashing of jets overhead, underscoring the contemporaneity of the play. A laden abeyance lingers on.

CHAPTER FOUR

Aporia in Arcadia:

A Philosophical Reading of Howard Barker's *Ego in Arcadia*

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"Is my death possible?" (Jacques Derrida, *Aporias* 21)

"Thus, I speak here in memory of this word [i.e., aporia], as of someone with whom I would have lived a long time, even though in this case one cannot speak of a decision or a contract." (*Aporias* 13)

"If you hate the world... / You must invent another..." (*Ego in Arcadia*)

"Come and practice death with me." (Barker, *Brutopia* 175)

Introduction

Howard Barker's *Ego in Arcadia* (1992) takes ego and Arcadia and what haunts and negatively founds these two – to wit, the Other and/as death, respectively- not only as its points of departure, but as its focal point. The title of the play seems to allude to Nicolas Poussin's painting *Et in Arcadia Ego,* thus purportedly featuring as an ekphrastic rendition or dramatic re-visioning of this painting[117]. Poussin's painting illustrates four figures bemused with the discovery of a sarcophagus with an inscription apparently symbolizing death in a landscape allegedly portending eternal youth and spring. We see a kneeling figure tracing the writing on a tomb, spelling out the letters - Et in Arcadia Ego - to his companions. Erwin Panofsky, in his reading of Poussin's two versions of *The Arcadian Shepherds,* identifies two interpretations of this epitaph, and insists that both are correct; the first one: "I too was born and lived in Arcady"; and alternatively, "Even in Arcady there I am" (Panofsky, "Et in Arcadia Ego: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition"; 295-320). Significantly, an irreducible ambiguity informs the shifter "ego" or "I" in the adage. Four referents can be considered to be implied by "I". First, it, uncannily, refers to death; uncanny in that this putative signifier of absolute presence ("I": in the first person) is used by the signifier of absolute absence (death); secondly, to the shepherd lying buried under the tombstone; and, thirdly, it can be construed to advert to the poet/painter himself; though in relation to the play, as Zimmermann indicates, it also evokes the "dramatis personae" (198). The final, yet most pertinent signified, I

[117]Charles Lamb (163), briefly, and Zimmermann (198-9), in more detail, have both indicated this possible connection too. Zimmermann in two separate essays, the subject of neither is Ego in Arcadia per se, engages with the role painting plays in Barker's theatrical and dramatic texts. "Images of Death in Howard Barker's Theatre" (211-30) and "Memories of Paintings in Howard Barker's Theatre" (192-206) he undertakes an extended study of the relation between painting and dramatic texts under the rubric of "ekphrasis" in Barker.

would suggest, is "ego" in the sense of subjective ego or one's egoity (distinguished from subjectivity), in general, and as conceived in philosophy and psychoanalysis in particular. Indeed, the very nature of subjective ego coupled with its existential-ontological dimensions, as we will observe below, lie at the hub of *Arcadia*.

Nonetheless, besides the memento mori foreboding emblazoned at the heart of the painting, Nicolas Poussin's representation unobtrusively embeds other questions into this elegiac inquiry which have a patent bearing on Barker's *Ego in Arcadia* too, namely, the problem of medium in conjunction with that of the artistic self and the possibility (and ethics) of representation. More accurately, these three questions concern the aporetic relation between representation (writing or reading), subjectivity/agency, and death. Therefore, the painting, amenable as it is to being read in terms of the transience of time, the mortality of the human, and of the possibility of its transcendence through art, yet comes to adumbrate another meaning too. Whilst the reading figure in the painting traces the letters, his arm casts a shadow on the tomb which takes the form of the traditional symbol of the scythe which cuts human life, thus implying that the very act of reading/viewing - and by extension that of writing/painting–ushers in the shadow which denies the stability, authority, and permanence that we traditionally tend to attribute to the medium: ars longa vita brevis.

By the same token, not only does Barker's *Ego in Arcadia* begin with an equally ambiguous and portentous movement of hand, but a sweeping survey of the play reveals the manner the whole play, analogously, broaches the problematic of self (questions surrounding autonomy and solipsism), the other (heteronomy, transcendence), the possibility of self-overcoming (excendence), and meaning (or truth) through three issues: art, death, and love. In fact, on a closer inspection, it is the *problematic of border* that proves to permeate all the foregoing issues, forming a matrix in which ontological, aesthetic, and existential issues are fleshed out in relation to death (death qua death, death as a trope for border and border-crossing, and death as the ultimate exteriority and mystery), aesthetics of the self, ethics of the relation with the Other (epitomized in love), and the question of art (and correlates such as mimesis, representation, and essence of art/poetry). The sole exception in this regard, however, is that the whole dynamics of Poussin's painting has been reversed in Barker's *Arcadia*. In contrast to Poussin's "Arcadia" where

everything is sought but death which is nevertheless distressingly confronted, in Barker's Arcadia nothing is pursued or yearned for but death and yet nearly never reached.

More particularly, the strikingly ironical point about Barker's *Ego in Arcadia*, notwithstanding its uniqueness in Barker's oeuvre (explicated at length below), is the dearth of critical attention to the play. There are merely three rather relatively brief studies that have dealt with *Arcadia*: those of Lamb, Zimmermann, and Rabey. *Ego in Arcadia* has been neglected and failed to receive an adequate, rigorous critical reflection in several respects. The failure to discern the significance and the unique position *Arcadia* occupies in Barker's oeuvre concerns not only lack of attention to its paradigmatic ontological status and the role of death therein, but its being a rich antecedent to the themes and motifs that tend to recur with accrued and intensified force and facets or are developed in new directions (including the ontological properties of artwork/Arcadia, and aporetic status of the author/artist, the essence/nature of artwork, the dynamics and modality of the relation between self and the other) in later plays more emblematic of Barker's tragic Theatre of Catastrophe: *A House of Correction* (2001), *The Road, the House, the Road* (2006), *Blok/Eko* (2011), *Hurts Given and Received* (2010) and *I Saw Myself* (2008). Another point of paramount significance that has been neglected and not properly appreciated is the very meaning and nature of Arcadia in the first place; more strictly, there has been a lack of meticulous attention to what and where Arcadia is, what Arcadia existentially and ethically involves; what influence it exerts on the dwellers; and what are the underlying reasons for all the foregoing.

The idiosyncrasies that distinguish *Ego in Arcadia* from other plays by Barker (particularly those of the preceding and the same period) can be summarized in four respects. First, it is not only one of the few plays in which the phenomenon, and question, of death is explicitly determined as the central subject, but is treated in all its volatility and ambiguity as well as the complexity of its dimensions: ontological, aesthetic, existential, and ethical. In fact, the three axes of the play (art, aesthetics of the finite self, and ethics of the relationship with the Other) are subtended by, and intricately interwoven through, death. Second, ontologically; there is, in *Arcadia*, a fraught relation between artwork and reality, representation and the event. The ontological status of the artwork and its locus in the symbolic discourse are brought into critical focus from the outset. Third, as regards the formal and structural terms, the beginning and ending of *Ego in Arcadia* are unique or noteworthy among Barker's plays. Given the way the play opens and closes - with a

double-edged focus on the work of art and the body(ies) of the Other(s) (as potential art objects) whilst a hand is suspended between possibility and impossibility, between intervention and observation[118] - Arcadia accentuates the aporetic status of origin, agency and autonomy (alongside the arbitrary-subjective nature of beginning and ending) both in aesthetic and ontological respects (in this regard, only *The Road, the House, The Road*, *Hurst Given and Received*, and partly *Rome* bear comparison with it). Fourth, the sheer absence of the characteristic Barkerian protagonist (of the middle and sporadically later period), namely, a transgressive, apparently self-determining/defining individual who, refusing to conform to the moral authority of social totality and defying an oppressive, assimilationist socio-symbolic or political-ideological state, endeavours to surpass collective values and moral categories in pursuit of the re-fabrication of the self through knowledge, pain, and beauty. In fact, there is hardly the faintest trace of a discursive imperative or force to be flouted at a socio-political level in *Arcadia*. The play is much more existentially inflected and presents a seemingly immanent world, and the characters are associated with arts or aesthetics varyingly.

Based on the foregoing points, I will pursue the question of aporeticity and probe three principal facets of it as are discernible in *Ego in Arcadia*: ontological aporias, aporias of death, and aporias of love and/or relationality (to wit, those inhering the relationship between the self and the Other (under the rubric of the ethics of the Other). Indeed, these three, in their turn, constitute three main problematics of *Arcadia*, and I will accordingly seek to demonstrate the ways in which almost all the aforesaid issues – death, art, the relationship between self and alterity, and ontology - are traversed by the question of "aporia". In the following critical-analytical study of the play, initially taking issue with the former critical readings (carried out by Lamb, Zimmerman, and Rabey), I will contend that Barker's treatment of the foregoing issues in *Arcadia* can be identified to be mainly predicated on the notion of *aporia*. This aporetic feature will be shown to concern three spheres and dimensions of the play: ontological, aesthetic, and ethical.

Lamb in his critical study of the play, characterizes what he calls Barker's utopia as "diametrically opposed to those of [Thomas] More and Bradshaw [in *Victory*]"; he proceeds to argue that "whereas their projections are functional and utilitarian, *Arcadia* is essentially aesthetic, the ideal of innocence and the pastoral life – a world of poetry and song from which Death is

[118] The adoption of a mimetic or non-mimetic approach is also at issue here.

traditionally excluded" (79). Lamb continues to add that "Barker's Arcadia […] appears to be ruled […] by Poussin" (164). Rabey, similarly, argues along the same lines by rehearsing the same critical position as Lamb's, adding that Barker's version is a "catastrophic Arcadia" (Ian Rabey 79, Lamb 163). And finally Zimmerman, consonant with the other two critics, concludes his critical reading of the play with the statement: "It is the artist, not Death, that rules in Arcadia" (225). All three critics unanimously ascribe the creation (and ontological determination) of the artwork and the world of Arcadia to Poussin, thereby unequivocally attributing a central, rather authoritative, position to the artist and deeming him, juxtaposed with art, as the principal point or concern of the play.

As will be observed in the ensuing discussion, however, I will diverge from the aforesaid critical stances by contending that Barker eschews either poles, or polar approaches, for that matter, to Arcadia. He neither conforms to the traditional conception of Arcadia as Utopia - as the pastoral or idyllic abode of unalloyed felicity, imperishable bliss, and an ideal of order, rationality and homogeneity from which pain, death, and difference are abolished- presented by writers such as Francis Bacon and Thomas More. Nor does he yield to a facile inversion of the idea of Arcadia by the interpolation of death as the nightmarish fate of human beings, treating it in a parodic manner, thus lapsing into the depiction of a Dystopia (as it is apparent in Nicolas Poussin's painting, illustrating a macabre facet of human life manifest in the overdetermined adage: "Et in Arcadia Ego"). On the contrary, far from constructing a utopia or dystopia, what Barker, in keeping with the characteristic attributes of his Theatre of Catastrophe, undertakes in *Arcadia*, is the creation of a "heterotopia"[119] where it is the im-possibility of the experience of death (though never

[119] I am utilizing "heterotopia" in the sense variously propounded by Vattimo and Foucault. Vattimo's general critical category (heterotopia) is, in fact, to a large extent applicable to the aesthetic and ontological dimensions of Barker's work in general, and *Arcadia* in particular. In the fifth and sixth chapters of his book – "From Utopia to Heterotopia" and "Utopia, Counter-Utopia, Irony" - Vattimo claims: "The most radical transformation in the relation between art and everyday life to have occurred since the sixties may be described as a transition from utopia to heterotopias" (*The Transparent Society* 62). Diverging from both utopian and counter-utopian stances, in Vattimo's definition, heterotopia does not pursue the utopian aims of "aesthetic rehabilitation of everydayness" and "comprehensive fusion of aesthetic and existential meaning" (64); it rather insists on the equivocal nature of the aesthetic realm in relation to the socio-symbolic world, along with an emphatic insistence on the autonomy of the aesthetic domain. Heterotopia stands in counterposition to strains inhering modernity and late capitalist logic; strains such as the world's "total organization", its "domination by an instrumental rationality", construction of a homogeneous, rational whole, and the completion of metaphysics (86-7). On this basis, in the end, Vattimo proposes a corresponding view of philosophy of history – which is ironic, distortive hermeneutic (premised on repetition-maintenance-distortion) and stands in opposition to linear and cyclic attitudes to history.
A heterotopia, according to Foucault, is "the oddity of unusual juxtaposition" coupled with the "fact that the common ground on which such meetings [of the components] are possible has itself been destroyed". Heterotopias, writes

certainly so), the impossibility of the possibility of death, the lack of death as being one's own- or in brief its being *aporetic* - which is at stake. As Mosca indicates, it is the absence of death (as a possibility) which renders the place horrifying and an occasion of "infinite suffering" (271).

Furthermore, though art (poetry and painting) occupies a prominent place in *Arcadia*, I would suggest, it is aporia (as an existential, ethical and ontological state with respect to death, selfhood, and limit/border of ontology and art) that constitutes the fulcrum of the play and provides its decentering impetus. To elucidate one instance, the issue of aporia at stake in relation to the self and its essence evinces itself in the triadic tangle of narcissism, melancholia and love. By the same token, in Barker's *Arcadia* - in contrast to three aforementioned critics' claim - no one, not even the artist holds sovereign authority (in fact, in the play, the artist himself is evidently beset with death and with the issues of relationality, representation, and the Arcadian state). My contention with regards to Poussin, as I will elaborate below, is that he was "born Arcadian" rather than governing Arcadia.

By the same token, by placing death (in its aporetic mode) at the centre of the play, Barker illuminates the reasons death has been assigned such a fundamental status in his Art of Theatre; it also delineates a symptomatology of the uses and abuses of death, demonstrating the way one's attitude and relation to death is inextricably entangled with one's self-conception, relationality (with the Other) and meaning of being. Accordingly, I will seek to establish that Barker's *Arcadia* is an aporetic, or il y a (tic), realm or space in which death is simultaneously present and absent, at once eluding the personal possession and grasp and yet promising to be one's own. On the other hand, this is put into dramatic effect (and on trial) for the purpose of determining and exposing the existential and ethical "*authenticity*"[120] in conjunction with the possibility of self-transcendence and an aesthetics of becoming-other.

In addition, the main force that propels the characters in the play is not 'sexual desire', as Zimmerman as well as Lamb tend to assume; since not only some of the characters apparently rebuff, refrain from, or are quite nonchalant to, sexual desire, but, as is overtly borne out in the

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Foucault, "are disturbing ... because they make it impossible to name this *and* that, because they shatter and tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax' in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to 'hold together'"*(Order* xviii)

[120] Authenticity is here understood in terms of fidelity to fluidity, contingency and finitude of the nature of the foregoing phenomena: one's lived experience, selfhood, relationship with the other and with death, and art.

course of *Ego in Arcadia*, what the characters primarily seek is death - not only death as such (either for cessation/evasion of being or relief/release from being), but also death in the sense of renunciation of their former selves and world. On this premise, the characters are in fact, due to the absence of death in *Arcadia*, driven by *horror* and, equally vigorously, with *love* - which is not primarily sexual. Indeed, the very reason the song contest is held by Tocsin is the endowment of death to whomever wins it. An event which appears as a site for gesturing towards the exploration, overcoming, and even re-fabrication of one's selfhood in relation to and in the proximity with exteriority or alterity.

Accordingly, I would argue that, in *Arcadia*, Barker deconstructs not only the very idea, or imaginary construct, of Arcadia[121], but also deconstructs the ideological, traditional and existential-phenomenological attitudes towards death. The foremost point to be indicated as to the philosophical approach that underpins my argument is that, here, by deconstruction I intend the sense Derrida posits for the term. One of the definitions Derrida presents for deconstruction is "a certain aporetic experience of the impossible" (*Aporias* 15). I maintain that Barker accomplishes such a deconstructive move, on the one hand, by introducing the notion of death as the im-possibility of possibility, and, on the other hand, by deconstructing the idea of "limit" (of self, language/art and death).

The theoretical basis of my argument, in the first two parts, is grounded on three main figures: Derrida, Blanchot and Levinas (with occasional references to Heidegger, Vattimo, Foucault and Lyotard). In the last part, in which I dwell on the proposed ternary of narcissism, melancholia and love, I will be drawing on Kristeva, Lacan and Badiou to investigate two alternatively present attitudes towards the foregoing issues in Arcadia. To accomplish this task, I will extend the scope of the discussion to include other plays such as Golgo and *Early Hours of a Reviled Man* among others.

[121] Arcadia as an ideologically and existentially tranquilizing and palliative ideal and construct which appears variously and in different permutations including: Enlightenment humanism, socialism and Marxism and their correlates as well as liberalism (informed by grand-narratives of emancipation and of speculation, capitalist Disney Land – all governed and functioning by principles and criteria such as pleasure principle, use and exchange value, unbounded spectacle and consumerism, principles presaging or simulating/replicating an Arcadian land).

I. Ontological Aporias in Arcadia: The Aporetic Experience of self

In this section, initially, a succinct summary of the play is presented (with the intention of exposing the problems vexing the play as well as this study). I will then proceed to dwell on the question of ontology, delineating the ontological idiosyncrasies of *Arcadia*, and attempting to tackle the question as to what renders Barker's *Arcadia* ontologically aporetic.

Ego in Arcadia consists of ten Eclogues; thus, formally, it conforms to some of the features of pastoral tradition. The play opens when Sansom, a revolutionary, is leading Dover, a former queen of a deposed monarchy, to the execution point – a tree. Dover is challenging and disingenuously eloquent, and strives to dissuade him from hanging her with a display of wit and (sexual) wile. However, at the point of execution Mosca (a sophisticated courtier, and a former lover of Dover) arrives and kills Sansom, though to no avail, since moments later he is revived (due to death being abolished from Arcadia). Gradually the other characters make their appearance: Sleen (a novelist/artist), Le Vig (an actor), Lilli (an artist model), Poussin (a painter), Verdun (Poussin's lover), and Mme Poussin (Poussin's mother). Characters variously strive to come to terms with the alienating and uncanny conditions in Arcadia and start reconnoitering the borders of the land, trying to discover its rules and features. Almost all characters appear to be encumbered with afflictions from the world (their previous lives as lived in the so-called real world) and enter Arcadia (in fact, are thrown into it as a testament to their facticity) seeking death as relief and respite.

In the course of the play, all characters find themselves undergoing emotional and mental upheaval, mainly gravitating towards deterioration and dissolution. Impelled with contradictory motives and feelings, the characters resort to love as the sole remedy and possible means of escaping horror (of the absence of death), grief, and their selfhood by seeking fulfillment thus. But, despite their unremitting endeavors, almost all of them (with few exceptions) fail. Sansom who initially intended to murder Dover loses his incentive and instead finds himself captivated by her. Dover, formerly an ardent lover of Mosca, loses her love in him and conceives a passionate

desire for Poussin. Later in the play, she repudiates wit and satire (formerly her staples) as a sham dam, or defense mechanisms, against genuine exposure to the event (or the other) and against an aesthetics of self-overcoming, thereby becoming genuinely enamored of Poussin who finally rejects her. Lilli is almost enthralled with Sleen who, though professes to her being the object of his "childish" love, yet relentlessly rebuffs and degrades her. Similarly Verdun forlornly harbours a fervent love for Poussin which (though verbally acknowledged by him) remains unreciprocated. Sleen in his own turn, at odds with his ingrained and inveterate disposition of apathy, melancholia and cynicism, comes to cultivate an abject love for Dover, makes a leap of faith for the first and last time in the play and proposes to her; his venture, however, is ignored and declined.

Gradually, it becomes apparent that most characters are weary not only of the world but of the ruthless conditions prevailing in Arcadia, hence they start seeking death as a respite. Some try committing suicide and some try murdering their loved-hated ones. Nevertheless, because death is banished from Arcadia, no one in fact dies, and death can endow no relief. The sole way to attain death, as later determined, is through a song contest, the trophy of which is the granting of death. The song contest is held, and yet no one wins. Poussin, on being approached by Tocsin (who is going to embody the dispenser of death) and incited by Dover, wrestles with Tocsin and kills him; as a consequence, death is, aporetically, both affirmed (by the death of death/Tocsin) and eradicated from Arcadia. Towards the open-ended conclusion of the play, Sleen retreats to a cave to lead a reclusive life (or probably to die there). Dover's pleas for Poussin's love remain unanswered; on the other hand Sansom's desperate attempts to win Dover's favor prove futile. Accordingly, the whole play can be considered to end with a differential repetition of its beginning. This time Sansom advances towards Dover (who, this time, resigns willingly) and murders her (though apparently with an entirely different motive – unrequited/unreciprocated love - from that of the beginning of the play); further, this time, Mosca allows Sansom to fulfill his act, while watching the scene without intervening. It is only subsequently that he proceeds to kill Sansom. The concluding gesture of the play consists in Poussin tentatively approaching the scene (and Dover's dead body in particular) while Dover lies dead on the ground, gesturing towards "Less / Less". As I will demonstrate below, Poussin is here driven less with the intention of representing its ambiguity or incorporating the painful beauty of Dover's state and others' in his painting, than with a less authoritative and subjective approach, and with the intention of figuring the sublime dynamics and unrepresentable alterity present in the scene.

The ontological aporia concerning Arcadia adumbrated above is intended as a twofold; on one level, it applies both to the thematics and to the inner logics (and dynamics) of the fictional/dramatic world of *Ego in Arcadia*. Apparently death, love, and authentic selfhood are all simultaneously impossible and possible, absent and present in Arcadia. More accurately, with respect to all three aforementioned issues, the conditions of possibility are also the conditions of impossibility. Furthermore, *Ego in Arcadia* does not have a distinct narrative since hardly anything happens by way of progress or regress in the course of the play to advance the plot except the song contest towards the end, and even that does not effect substantial alterations in terms of action. Nevertheless, murders, suicides (both futile given the absence of death) and attempts on love-relations coupled with psychological-existential cataclysms abound in the play. On a second level, aporia concerns the meta-fictional as well as mise-en-abyme status of *Ego in Arcadia* as an artwork in relation to its own conditions of creation, its contemporary socio-historical world/context, and the socio-symbolic discourse (the so-called real); and, finally, with respect to the ontological status of other works by Barker. We will elaborate on both dimensions at length later in this section.

Based on the foregoing features, when we probe the play, it becomes evident that the *aporetic* conditions prevail from the beginning; Arcadia strikes us as virtually *unsituatable*.[122] The intersection of different temporal and spatial axes coupled with the imbrications of diverse historical and geographical boundaries are both discernible at the very outset of *Arcadia*. Apparently, what unfolds before our eyes, or in our minds, is a littered, desolate and devastated *text-land-canvas* situated somewhere between infinite/imminent future and infinite/immediate past. We witness the coalescence of disparate individuals, entities, and phenomena into a landscape/stagescape of dissonance without deliverance: a seventeenth-century poet/painter (Poussin), a passing aircraft (historically, an invention of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century), Dover, who is characterized as the queen of a declined monarchy (probably the nineteenth-century France), Sleen, who as Lamb, Rabey and Zimmerman all unanimously attest, either roughly impersonates the twentieth-century French novelist Louis-Ferdinand Celine or one of the characters in his autobiographical novel, along with some other refugees from across the

[122]As S. M. Wortham, expounding Derrida's notion of aporia, states: "The aporia is as much unsituatable as it is an identifiable situation. Indeed, to situate or identify an aporia is to give a name to an experience that, by definition, cannot be 'properly' recognized or experienced as such" (15)

world and history (see *Arcadia* 269)[123]. The characters can thus be construed to reside somewhere between fictionality and facticity, allusion and allegory, history and story where the boundaries are indefinitely blurred.

Therefore, the traces (or "cinders") of history (both fictional/allegorical and actual) linger while the history seems to have collapsed or been suspended in Arcadia. All evidences are indicative of an impossible, yet eternal, present in which history and non-history overlap. As such, *Arcadia* is indeed located at a partage of the 'arrivant' (*Aporias* 33-35) – an untimely threshold where 'anonymity', 'neutrality' and 'singularity' (with respect self, world, and history) converge to found a potential site for the emergence of, or encounter with, alterity or event. This is indeed manifested in the ostensibly blank canvas which is unveiled by the painter, Poussin, at the very beginning of the play: "A painter of the Seventeenth century enters. He uncovers a canvas on an easel. He departs" (179). Thus we seem to be inhabiting an in-between time and an interstitial space (that is, in entretemps and its spatial counterpart: il y a, respectively). In fact, Arcadia appears to be wholly beyond any determinate, identifiable social contexts even as it seems to be located somewhere in the very midst of a defunct society. Interestingly, this interstitial time is in fact the locus where Levinas defines "the alterity", the "otherness of the artwork", and "the tragic nature of artwork" (*Collected Philosophical Papers* 9; see also AFE)[124], articulating it as the very site of "transcendence" (of egoistic self and the ontological totality). Such non-ontological (hauntological) place/space and non-chronological time present in Barker's Arcadia (and numerous other places in his work) evoke Levinas' idea of literature as "an unheard of modality

[123]Analogous anachronisms or intersections and imbrications of different historical and fictional (intertextual) temporalities occur in other plays, exemplary among which are *The Bite of the Night*, *The Castle*, and *A House of Correction*.

[124] As Levinas explains: "The conflict between freedom and necessity in human action appears in reflection: when action is already sinking into the past, man discovers the motifs that necessitated it. But an antimony is not a tragedy. In the instant of a statue, in its eternally suspended future, the tragic, simultaneity of necessity and liberty, can come to pass: the power of freedom congeals into impotence. And here too we should compare art with dreams: the instant of a statue is a nightmare. Not that the artist represents beings crushed by fate - beings enter their fate because they are represented. They are enclosed in their fate but just this is the artwork, an event of darkening of being, parallel with its revelation, its truth. It is not that an artwork reproduced a time that has stopped: in the general economy of being, art is the falling movement on the hither side of time, into fate. A novel is not, as M. Pouillon thinks, a way of reproducing time; it has its own time, it is a unique way for time to temporalize. We can then understand that time, apparently introduced into images by the nonplastic arts such as music, literature, theater and cinema, does not shatter the fixity of images. That the characters in a book are committed to the infinite repetition of the same acts and the same thoughts is not simply due to the contingent fact of the narrative, which is exterior to those characters. They can be narrated because their being *resembles* itself, doubles itself and immobilizes. Such a fixity is wholly different from that of concepts, which initiates life, offers reality to our powers, to truth, opens a dialectic. By its reflection in a narrative, being has a non-dialectical fixity, stops dialectics and time". (Levinas, CPP 9-10)

of otherwise than being" (*Proper Names* 46) alongside "the research of modern art" and "art in the stage of search, a stage never overcome"; a search which involves an interminable movement of proximity towards the other through a composite time/space of errancy "from place to non-place, from here to utopia" (*Proper Names* 41-2); a departure from one's ego (or egological ontology) towards "otherwise than being" accomplished through sensibility and language. Significantly, Levinas also related this modality of time to the temporality of death or that of nightmare.

The other significant element of Arcadia is not only the aporetics of time, but also that of space. In *Arcadia* too Barker deconstructs the phenomenon or idea of limit or boundary through a certain aporetic rendition and "rhetoric of borders" (*Aporias* 3): borders of the self and the other, borders of life and death, borders of time and place. Statements and remarks made by characters throughout the play contribute to the unraveling of the aporetic dynamics of space in Arcadia and provide the context for their occurrence. On the one hand, Arcadia has been delineated in a way as if almost all traces or tokens of the world (be it modern or older) and life have been expunged from it. Lili bitterly complains about not only the absence of any news media, including radio, newspaper or any other means of communication, but her not managing to find a mirror (282, 292). In the following excerpt by Sleen, initially he claims to know and recognize Arcadia based on his "classical education", and yet he at this stage fails to realize the radically altered state of Arcadia (in *Ego in Arcadia* and as re-created by Barker): "Where are we? As if I didn't know **I had a classical education** […] / And this woman craves the bidet and the room service / **Some hopes this is Arcadia** (A cry off, a melancholy tone. A man enters with an easel, he erects it, watched by the others. Pause.) (273). Another pertinent element concerns the aporetic tension (lying at the heart of Arcadia) between the concrete spatial-temporal dimensions and psychic-spiritual ones. The evidence that enhances the spatial-ontological aporia and throws into further ambiguity the borderline state of Arcadia comes to the fore when we juxtapose Lili's expression of discovery of the possibility of a passage out and others' responses to the contrary. Having indefatigably scoured the land, Lili exclaims: "Listen, this place is - (Pause. They ignore her.) I walked to the edge of it and - (They ignore her.) / There is an edge but - (She looks at them.) / I think if we tied things together ... ropes and so on ... (It is as if she were invisible, inaudible to them.) **Don't you want to live a life?**" (306) The validity of this discovery, however, is severely undermined when Mosca, Poussin and even Sleen variously advert to Arcadia as a state of mind thereby wholly removing it from physical-historical and socio-symbolic contexts.

On the other hand, at least as far as the scene descriptions (and stage directions) and characters' reactions reveal to us, the commotion of industrial activities, the uproars of political insurgencies and social turmoils, rumbling of the cannon and machine guns, and a medley of other sounds (such as those of altercations, sheep, and interior of restaurants) jar on the land, and are heard by its dwellers despite its being ostensibly described as lying beyond the world. (272, 306, 308, 322). When Lili comes and says that there is a way leading out of Arcadia, Mosca confirms: "And yet the world is near ... (He listens again. Sounds on the wind.)" (298). Also important are the associations and evocative names of the characters which feature as historical or pseudo-historical signifiers: Sleen (resonant with Louis-Ferdinand Celine), Verdun (recalling The Battle of Verdun[125]), and Mosca[126]. Hence Arcadia can be reckoned to be simultaneously detached from the world and attached to it with faint ties and associations. Arcadia appears both as *not* an absolutely impassable path and as a non-passage, yet, they behave as if it is practically or virtually a non-passage, since no one leaves it or finds a way out. Thus, we can conclude that the characters in Arcadia are dwellers of the (non)state/condition of Aporia.

The ensuing passages demonstrate how the characters perceive the loss at both ontological and socio-political levels. They also register the ontological concerns at the core of the play. The characters are poignantly aware of the loss they have experienced and couch it primarily in terms/register of "ontological dereliction" or loss. The following conversation between Dover and Mosca bears this issue out:

> DOVER: So hard ... [...] I want to speak the truth — [...] You always disparaged truth, which was a mark of your sophistication, but ... we are not sophisticated any more ... and must learn simple things...
>
> MOSCA: Simple? You?-

[125] The Battle of Verdun was fought during the First World War, from 21 February to 18 December 1916, between the German and French armies.

[126] Three sources for this implicit allusion are conceivable. First, there is an identically named character in Ben Jonson's *Volpone*. Second instance is Barker's own mentioning of "The philosopher Mosca" in *Death, the One* (25)). Third, I would suggest that Mosca, given his aristocratic life (as a minister) in the court, his class consciousness, and his solicitude over dignity, self-esteem, and sophisticated taste bears a considerable and shares notable common features with the late-nineteenth-century and twentieth-century political scientist Gaetano Mosca (1858 -1941). Mosca was an Italian political scientist, jurist and public servant. He is credited with developing the *Theory of* Elitism and the doctrine of the Political class and is one of the three members founding the *Italian School of Elitists* in collaboration with Vilfredo Pareto and Robert Michels.

DOVER: Yes... (Pause) Our world went, darling man... and though I have lived years of ecstasy in the power of your gravity... we are not stars, are we? Our orbits aren't eternal...? (283)

The cosmological analogy clearly reflects the dynamics of contingency, mutability, and finitude of relations and sexual love/desire prevalent in Arcadia. It also attests to how the dominant state in Arcadia involves the dissolution of inter-subjective bonds and the values and rules of the world (and their former personal worlds). When Mosca attempts to bring the eventfulness of their relationship to Dover's attention - by establishing a parallel between the ontological and the interpersonal (attachments, decisive encounters, and affective investments), in the sense that the pattern of individual's world and the meaning of one's life emanate from a cartography of intersubjective encounters and adventitious events immanent to one's life - Dover counterpoises Arcadia to Mosca's world, as if to imply that Arcadia does not abide by this basic rule,:

MOSCA: Anna, the world is a map of our encounters...

DOVER: Yes ... but this is not the world ... this is Arcadia... (284)

This trend of de-familiarization goes so far as even the language of the outside world, as regards the practical and[127] ideological terms, has lost its meaning in Arcadia, since the referents seem to have vanished and thus the applicability of many signifiers has been nullified. The absence of common concepts and inapplicability of socio-political distinctions in Arcadia prove disorienting and alienating. This strain is testified to by Mosca's and Sleen's explicit remarks in this regard. Mosca, calling after Lili, laments: "**The vocabulary is going what next the language slipping what next...!**" (298). Elsewhere Sleen poignantly realizes that: "Words were never more transparently absurd than now and yet" (304). Analogously, when Le Vig mentions his "brief flirtation with the fascists" (288) while acting in a film during the First World War, Poussin is bemused at hearing the words:

POUSSIN: Fascism? What's that?

[127] "The sound of swooping, strafing aircraft. The sounds of bickering, panicked conversations, utterances. A crowd of refugees, clutching bags and coats, enters tightly in a mob. As the aircraft sweeps low they stoop, freeze. The aircraft departs and instantly, they stagger onwards, muttering, cursing, hysterical". (269)

VERDUN: A word … (She looks at him. She smothers her face.) No, not a word...! A thing...! The opposite to democracy ... which ... Please ... please ... let me go…

POUSSIN: Democracy? What's that?

VERDUN: Let me go, will you...! (Pause)

Matters are compounded more intensely when it comes to the question of life and death. When Le Vig insists:

I don't like it here ... / (Poussin merely looks into him).

It's — / I'm being emotional again — its —

Peculiarly — / Like being / Dead ... (288)

Poussin dispels the possibility of any equivalence between death and Arcadia, or Arcadia as a limbo-like realm of death (the dead) or post-death. He rather affirms Arcadia as the more real and life-like of the two. As such he renders the question of identity and border even more aporetic:

I think, quite soon, you will come to see — [...] No! The tone of that! The patrician tone of that! [...] as if my genius entitled me – [...] Perhaps it does? Entitle me? (LE VIG is uneasy.) Dead, you say? No, you were dead. This is life. (Barking of dogs, distantly. LE VIG gets up, anxiously.) (289)

With the evident prospect of aporetics of time and place in view, and given the consideration of aporia as a liminal phenomenon or an interstitial event, we can deduce that Arcadia takes *place* in the *time* of the meanwhile. In other terms, the time of Arcadia can be compared to the time of dying, the time of writing, the time of the event, both in terms of the aesthetics of the self and of the ethics of the "absolute arrivant" or the Other (*Aporias* 33-5)[128] at stake in the foregoing

[128] Derrida characterizes the absolute arrivant with three attributes: neutrality, singularity and anonymity. Derrida and defines posits the traits or attributes of: "the arrivant , the most arrivant among all arrivants, the arrivant par excellence, is whatever, whoever , in arriving , does not cross the threshold separating two identifiable places the proper and the foreign, the proper of the one and the proper of the other,[...] (34). Derrida observes that the absolute arrivant not only drastically disarrays one's existential and ontological grounds and "who is not even a guest [...] surprises the host – who is not yet a host or an inviting power – enough to call into question, to the point of annihilating or rendering

processes. Accordingly, Arcadia figures simultaneously as a transitional/transitive domain/process and an intransitive state or non-site (what paves the way for rendering it as a state of aporia). In *Ego in Arcadia*, as an aporetic state, in the very throes of the impossibilities of death, self-fabrication, and self-abnegation, glimpses of possibility are observable through two things: one, the creative act of painting/writing and composing lyric poetry (at the song contest) in which - through the possible alterations inherent in the acts of self-expression as a speech event, that is, a Levinasian Saying as a gesture of self-exposure to the Other through language/poetry – the possibility of self-knowledge, transcendence, and trans-figuration are rendered possible. And two, through the possibility of love (though not in the sense of getting assimilated into or the accommodation of, the Other). By extension, the aesthetic of lessness[129], adopted by Poussin at the play's conclusion, can be considered as being consequent upon such dynamics in Arcadia.

Now, concerning the aporetic conditions and state of *Arcadia* - aporia as a state of mind, aporia as an existential state – the ensuing questions tends to preoccupy us. Whose state of mind Arcadia is? (Each character's, Barker's as the writer of *Ego in Arcadia*, or Poussin's as the painter in Arcadia (an ascription which an attestation which he disavows?) Does the characters' convergence upon Arcadia as a material-mental/psychic space mean that they have reached a certain similar existential state prior to entering into Arcadia? If so, what is that state? Proposing tenable answers to these queries entails unfolding more accurately what we mean by aporia in the first place. Thus far I have been wielding the term aporia without particularly expatiating on it. However, given the fact that the concept of "aporia" underpins this chapter (in ontological, thanatotic and (inter)subjective respects), we need to make a brief excursion to elucidate its meaning and implications, as intended here, and particularly as propounded by Derrida.

Etymologically, the term 'aporia' has been derived from Greek and comprises two morphemes: 'a' (a negational prefix in Greek, meaning 'without' or 'not') and "poria" or poros (designating a route, a path, or a passage). Accordingly, it designates an impasse, an impassable path, an absolute blockage, an unsurpassable step. However, what intensifies the semantic ambiguity and richness, coalesced with the philosophical subtlety of the term is that, "poros", as

indeterminate, all the distinctive signs of a prior identity, beginning with the very border that delineated a legitimate home and assured lineage, names and language, nations, families and genealogies" (34).

[129] An aesthetic which derives from the late modernist style and postmodernist sensibility in which the authorial intentionality and authority are undermined to the verge of deconstruction.

Kofman elucidates, should not be conflated with "odos", since it does not signify all kinds of paths, such as footpaths, roads and terrestrial ways. Poros, however, specifically refers to the most elusive, polymorphous, and volatile of all paths: a watery path (*Beyond Aporia* 10)[130]; hence, it is least susceptible to cartography and topography. As Kofman avers: "One speaks of a poros when it is a matter of blazing a trail where no trail exists, of crossing an impassable expanse of territory, an unknown, hostile and boundless world, an apeiron which it is impossible to cross from end to end; the watery depths, the pontos, is the ultimate apeiron" (10). Kofman delineates a meticulous itinerary of this term. Accordingly, aporia spans an expansive history in the Western philosophy, reaching back to pre-Socratic philosophers, Sophists and Plato and forward to Blanchot and Beckett. Aporia, in Kofman's elaboration, breaks with the logic of identity and pertains to the logic of intermediary (26-7); it thus transpires as the transitional and liminal figure par excellence. In accord with its etymological-mythological roots, aporia entails a vertiginous state of the simultaneity of lack/emptiness (inducing intense desire) and (pain of) pregnancy; and being delivered from such an aporetic state requires the mediation of philosopher/midwife (see Kofman 25-7). Aporia, in Kofman's account, is associated with death, eros, mimesis, techne, and

[130] Kofman traces the genealogical roots of aporia back to Greek mythology – as recounted by Socrates in *Symposium* - where an unorthodox version of the story of the birth of Eros/Love (Aporia) is told. Eros had a father (Poros) and a mother (Penia). Poros was the son of Metis (goddess of justice and prudence) and his name etymologically signifies abundance and plenitude; whereas Penia was a vagrant wanderer whose name signifies dearth, paucity, and penury. As such, aporia is inextricably entangled with the genealogy of Eros (a combination of Poros and Penia). Kofman's explanation is elucidating in this regard: "Penia is no more opposite of Poros than is the aporia; the true, philosophical aporia, or Penia, is always fertile; in her all opposites are placed under erasure. She is neither masculine nor feminine, neither rich nor poor, neither a transition nor the absence, neither resourceful nor without resources" (Kofman 27). As a result, Eros/Aporia, who is the offspring of the intercourse between the former two, embodies contradictory features. Kofman, however, diverging from mythical orthodoxy, posits Eros (love), simultaneously the daemon and the philosopher, as "intermediary" between "Poros and Aporia" rather than between Poros and Penia.
In classical philosophy, aporia is equally vehemently claimed by both sophistry and philosophy (8-10) Plato establishes a keen contrast between philosophical episteme (as rigorous science and seeking truth through contemplation) and metis (wily intelligence) which operates through stochastic (speculative, conjectural) methods; and accordingly pits truth against aporia. Kofman deals at length with Socrates as reflected and recorded in Plato's work – scrutinizing works as wide and various as The Laws, Phaedrus, Parmenides, Philebus, Euthydemeus, Phaedo, and Protagoras (11-23)– She then subjects to scrutiny the way the boundaries between philosophy and sophistry are more blurred and precarious than philosophers would admit. As Kofman demonstrates they are indeed co-implicated and that the imputations levelled at sophistry by philosophy based on its use of aporetic methods are primarily morally based and not firmly tenable. Kofman perceptively points out the aporias inherent in philosophy itself and to how both Socrates and Plato wield (good, non-deceptive) aporetic means to release thought and men from a state of aporia and ruses of sophistry. She also refers to how even Socrates himself were numerous times accused of using aporetic methods to trap his interlocutors. In this regard, she adverts to the aporetic position and role of Socrates as a midwife/philosopher of the soul "the fertile art of bringing forth the souls" (24).

ineluctable transgression of boundaries (of truth, language, gender, and identity) rendering all of them unstable and multifaceted phenomena. I shall deal with Kofman's discussion further below.

In the field of contemporary theory and philosophy, aporia finds its most sustained and rigorous exegesis and application, probably, in Derrida's *Aporias*. Derrida, in his later (and highly dense) book *Aporias* (1993), identifies the figure of "aporia" as not only the pivotal figure of deconstruction, which shares functional analogy with other key terms such as différance supplement, iterability, tympanum, and arche-trace (*Aporias* 15). In fact, he also concisely delineates the way he has been preoccupied with, and deploying the concept (and logic) of aporia in diverse guises throughout his career[131]. Derrida's deceptively slender volume proves to contain a vigorous and challenging engagement with the principal trends in Continental philosophy in relation to the problems of limit/border in general, and to that of death in particular. In *Aporias*, Derrida pursues a manifold project weaving a cluster of critical issues around the concept of aporia; then undertaking a deconstructive reading to expose the aporetic nature of them, Derrida unravels their discrete distinctions revealing the binary logic on which they are predicated by hinting at the logic of leakage and supplementarity informing them. Since I will tackle Derrida's aporetic analysis of death with a particular comparative engagement with Heidegger, Levinas and Ariès at length below, here I will dedicate the discussion to the definition and explication of the premises of aporia (with respect to the question of border/limit and concomitant ontological and ethical issues).

Referring to Aristotle's *Physics* (and his own take on it in *Gramme and Ousia*) in conjunction with the Aristotelian-Hegelian aporetic of time as among the earliest instances of the appearance of the term, Derrida proceeds to distinguish aporia from Kantian antinomy and Hegelian contradiction/negativity in dialectics in that, with aporia, the terms involved are not resolved and sublated into a synthesis but ceaselessly continue haunting each other as impossibility of possibility[132]. Interestingly, aporia as such (both as an approach or method and as a logic),

[131] Derrida schematically sketches out the instances of the recurrence of the logic of aporia in other works of his by referring to the paradoxical limitrophy of Tympan, the double bind in *Glas*, the work of impossible mourning in *Psyche*, and similar matters in *Memoirs of Paul de Man*, and *Schibboleth* in which he had posed and pondered and pursued concerns analogously informed with aporia.

[132] In fact, following Heidegger, Derrida notes how, especially in Kant and Hegel, the experience of the aporia is rendered dialectically or dialecticized. However, Derrida chooses the term aporia instead of "antinomy" since an antinomy involves "contradictions or antagonisms among equally imperative laws" that can be solved or overcome, whereas an aporia involves an irreducible and constitutive experience of impossibility or nonpassage (A 16). The

prefigures many of allegations attributed to Derrida's deconstructionist method and work by other philosophers (particularly analytical ones). As Kofman explicates, aporia is atopic and that in aporia all directions merge; the sophist as an artificer of discourses utilizes aporia (through his use of mimesis and techne) to disguise and subvert truth, thereby reducing "logos to a state of chaos" (15). Such an affinity is sustainable not in the sense of identity or equivalence between Derridean deconstruction and sophistry, but only in the sense of radical and systematic doubt about the metaphysical claim to a transcendental (or pure) identity, presence, and truth, Aristotelian and structuralist binarism, and Hegelian dialectics. By the same token, Derrida's aporetic logic/methodology does not preclude pragmatism, nor does it impede practical decision-making and responsibility to the point of paralysis, passivity, and stasis.

Accordingly, Derrida tackles speculating on and fathoming diverse facets of the term both performatively and theoretically, and the way aporia and its logic permeate various domains and dimensions of human life and sciences (including ethics, language, translation, violence, finitude, and relation to alterity). As Derrida explicitly states, aporia is not restricted to literature or philosophy, and subsumes a much broader scope. It, in fact, involves matters of death and life, law, ethics, politics and justice. Aporia designates a state in which the condition of possibility turns out to be simultaneously the condition of impossibility. Based on this definition, Derrida explores such a state in relation to truth, language, death, and border (as problematic and projection). Moreover, in the grip of the experience of aporia the person finds himself at a loss "where to go" and "how to begin" (A 12). Thus aporia proves to pervade the questions of beginning, middle, and end. Derrida underlines the significance of aporia and the fundamentally (deconstructive) role it plays in almost all arenas by calling it: "the law of all decisions, of all responsibilities… and of all the border problems that can ever arise" (A 78).

Furthermore, Derrida associates aporia with "not knowing where to go" (*Aporias* 12). This phrase is evocatively expressive of the situation with which the dwellers of *Arcadia* are grappling. It is less a matter of aimlessness or drivenness than being totally lost, and since direction has been effaced from both their lives and world, they - desperately in pursuit of placidity (to them often

contradiction of equally valid and necessary propositions found in an antinomy is overcome by demonstrating how it is "apparent or illusory," by dialecticizing the contradiction in a Hegelian or Marxist manner, or by rendering it as a "transcendental illusion in a dialectic of the Kantian type" (Ibid).

synonymous with acedia and death) and a stable (less volatile) self and relation to the other - peregrinate in Arcadia and try to reconnoiter it (resorting to and clashing with one another, and particularly with Poussin, for the possibility of a way beyond or outside). Furthermore, the relevance and correspondence of the elaboration Derrida advances with regard to aporia - as a "matter of the non-passage, or rather from the experience of the non-passage, the experience of what happens and is fascinating in this non-passage…" (12) - bears a remarkable affinity with *Arcadia*; in that, in a similar vein, the characters come to experience Arcadia as a non-passage, though involving highly consequential alterations and experiences. Derrida does not hesitate to caution us that the descriptive phrase "non-passage" should not be deemed as an absolute negativity or signifying a "negative" experience. He strenuously emphasizes that aporia does not necessarily foster sterility, stasis or crippling suspense, but, contrarily, can be fructifying and stimulating. In fact, the governing logic of aporia is not "binary opposition" but "chiasmatic plurality" (dissemination, supplement or différance); Derrida suggests that this kind of haunting is intrinsic to the "plural logic" of the aporia. He notes that the "partitioning [] among multiple figures of aporia does not oppose figures to each other, but instead installs the haunting of the one in the other.... the nonpassage, the impasse or aporia, stems from the fact that there is no limit" (*Aporias* 18-9). Thus aporia defies being understood in terms of positivity and negativity, thus instigating an interminable experience without ultimate reconciliation. Kofman in her rigorous reflection on aporia quotes a statement made by Aristotle which is highly relevant to both Derrida's point and to the role and a-logic of aporia in *Arcadia*. Recapitulating Aristotle, Kofman observes: "the wisdom of a midwife is no different from that of the politician [and philosopher], that she possesses an approximate, stochastic (conjectural) knowledge, the kind of knowledge that one assimilates during a long journey across a desert where no path is marked, where one must guess one's way..." (24)[133].

[133] Dan Katz, in a pioneering post-structuralist study of Samuel Beckett's fiction, discerns an aporetic logic pervading Beckett's trilogy, and *The Unnamable* in particular. Katz's articulation of the economy and the double, non-dialectical logic of aporia operative in Beckett's work derives from, and bears a striking resemblance to, Derrida's propounded stance above. As he incisively observes: "aporia is never considered as a stable state of unknowing-seen in this light it resembles too closely ataraxy, the stoic acceptance of knowing that one cannot know. Beckettian aporia is much more painful than this-not only can one not know, one cannot know that one cannot know" (100). Further on he adds: "The 'voice' of *The Unnamable* declares that it does not know what aporia means. The meaning not being known could be settled by discovery if aporia was something. But aporia is nothing. The 'experience' of aporia is the experience of nothing. That is why it is 'quite hopeless'. If 'I' say aporia then 'I' say that there is a path which does not lead anywhere. This lack of 'place' which is involved with aporia's possibility marks aporia as impossible. The very nature of aporia is to escape meaning and this is its meaning" (100-2).

Derrida finds a counterpart (or equivalent) – as regards the etymological complexity - of the word aporia in the French expression: "il y va d'un certain pas". This phrase, akin to aporia, semantically entails a double logic of stasis and mobility, of transitivity and intransitivity. Derrida captures this double sense – regarding death and borders which are figures of passage as much as non-passage - in the variously translatable clause: "*Il y va d'un certain pas*" meaning "It involves a certain step/not," where *pas* in French means both step and not (the sentence can also be translated in another register as "he goes with a certain gait" and "he goes along at a certain pace") (*Aporias* 8-9). Derrida discerns the irresolvably discrepant conjunction "the step/not" as crystallizing the possibility and impossibility of step/movement inherent in language. The step/not that becomes a problem (or more strictly, the step that crosses borders and renders compromised the indivisible edge that is intended to hold the identity of a border in place, a border that should not be crossed) reveals the multiple senses in which borders themselves can be construed as *problematic*.

Derrida, attending to the etymology of the word "problem" (derived Greek *problema* signifying protection, prosthesis, and pro-jection), posits border as problematic in both senses indicated, namely, "border-as-problematic" serving both as protection and a project; in other words, as something thrown in front of oneself, either as a shield for warding off danger, or as a task or enterprise to accomplish hence gaining time/future. In *Aporias* Derrida puts the notion of the border as problematic in direct tension with that of aporia. Being in a state of aporia entails that there is no longer any *problem*; that is to say, there is no longer any project, or shield against danger, in the place of the aporia (*Aporias* 11-12).[134] Later, focusing on Heidegger's ontological-existential phenomenology with respect to both his phenomenology as a methodology in general, and in relation to specific issues such as time, death, and language, Derrida demonstrates how Heidegger's philosophy is patently predicated on (though similarly aporetic) borders in three domains: "anthropological border", "conceptual demarcations", and "problematic closure" (73-4). One of the reasons for these categories being liable to an aporetic condition, as Derrida contends,

[134] Derrida more extensively clarifies: "It should be a matter of [...] what, in sum, appears to block our way or to separate us in the very place where it would no longer be possible to constitute a problem," project, or a projection, that is, at the point where the very project or the problematic task becomes impossible and where we are exposed absolutely without protection, without problem, and without prosthesis, without possible substitution' singularly exposed in our absolute and absolutely naked uniqueness, that is to say, disarmed, delivered to the other, incapable even of sheltering ourselves., behind what could still protect the interiority of a secret" (12).

is that Heidegger's phenomenological principle of "as such" is not as viable and sustainable as he intends it to be. Derrida articulates three facets of this aporetic logic (of border as problematic), or three different ways of understanding the place of the aporia in his writings. First, as a non-passage in the sense of an impermeability, an uncrossable border: an invincible impediment, a non-traversible limit; second as a non-passage stemming from the fact that there is no limit, or a limit that is so permeable as to not limit crossing; third, as a non-passage in the sense of an antinomy or contradiction without solution, without a method or path that would allow us to find our way through (*Aporias* 7-10).[135]

This in-between-ness, this intermediary state, im-possibility of possibility might strike us as an impassable, insurmountable and ever-suspended state. Derrida demonstrates, however, that the (non-)state of aporia neither induces a paralysis, nor leads to a stasis or sterility. As he cogently argues, aporia entails "an interminable experience" (*Aporias* 16), and, one would add, perhaps an interminable exposure to experience of/as the Other; an experience which demands response and responsibility. Aporia always leaves a "part maudit", a non-dialectizable, indissoluble and unresolved remainder or remnant. "The ultimate aporia is the impossibility of aporia as such. The reservoir of this word seems to me incalculable. This statement is made with and reckons with the incalculable itself." (*Aporias* 78). Indeed, to endure the impossibility of aporia is to be perpetually disposed to undergo the risk of other, or new, im-possible possibilities, an irreducible and uncontainable openness: "if one must endure the aporia, if such is the law of all decisions, of all responsibilities, of all duties without duty, and of all the borders problems that ever can arise, *the aporia can never simply be endured as such*. The ultimate aporia is the impossibility of the aporia *as such*. The reservoir of this statement seems to me incalculable" (Ibid). And as he contends elsewhere, aporia sets into motion "a new thinking of the possible" (AIWP 361)[136]. Aporia always already and invariably entails a drastic and vertiginous passage, an abyssal transition; as Kofman acutely comments: "There can be no aporia, in the true sense of the word, without a transition from a familiar state which affords one every security to a new and therefore a harrowing state" (21).

[135] Derrida suggestively asks: "Can one speak-and if so, in what sense-of an experience of the aporia? An experience of the aporia as such? Or vice versa: Is an experience possible that would not be an experience of the aporia?" (15)
[136] 'As If It Were Possible, "Within Such Limits"...', trans. Benjamin Elwood and Elizabeth Rottenberg, in *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews, 1971–2001*, ed. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 343–70.

Though I will tackle Derrida's attitudes towards the aporias of death and his deconstructive take on Heidegger at length below, suffice it here to mention a few points. Derrida observes here that death is often thought of as a border, and in most cultures and traditions death is portrayed in terms of a passage, an act of traversing the ultimate threshold or moving beyond the horizon (43), he, nevertheless, proceeds to impugn this prevalent perception, though without embracing the opposite pole, namely, re-capitulating the belief that death is without border; meaning, the claim does not simply imply that death itself could be said to trespass all the boundaries and limits. Derrida, noting that all cultures have their own representations, rituals, and understanding of death, contends that death changes face, language and body in crossing a border (of history, time, nations and geography) (*Aporias* 43). He significantly adds that every culture is a priori a culture of death (43), and that the very advent of culture is predicated on a relation to death instantiated in the act of mourning (reminiscent of Freud's reflection or speculative proposition or argument in *Moses and Monotheism* and *Civilization and its Discontents*) (*Aporias* 42). Instead, he maintains that all borders (the problematic as tracing or crossing) are aporetic and articulates aporia both in terms of, and as involving, 'the rhetoric of borders' (3). Premised on the abovementioned (aporetic) implications of the French clause, and extending the multivalence of the issue of problematic border to death (as involving the aporia of border), he goes on to pose four principal linguistic - and thus epistemological and ontological – possibilities: affirmative ("death is a border"), negative ("death has no border"), interrogative ("Can death be reduced to some line crossing, to a departure, to a separation, to a step and therefore to a decease?") and interro-denegative ("Is not death, like decease, the crossing of a border, that is, a trespassing on death, an overstepping or a transgression?") (*Aporias* 6).

Derrida himself, when explaining the reason he decided to engage with such an over-determined, cryptic, and long-standing philosophical concept as aporia, acknowledges that he has yielded to the term 'aporia' as if he has been chosen by it. Such a statement drastically diminishes claims to spontaneous and intentional agency, sovereign subjective autonomy; it also immensely enhances the ambiguity of the situation, and the scope and strength of the possibilities: "I gave in to the word *aporias*, in the plural, without really knowing where I was going and if something would come to pass, allowing me to pass with it, except that I recalled that, for many years now, the old, worn-out Greek term *Aporia*, this tired word of philosophy and of logic, has often imposed itself upon me, and recently it has done so even more often" (12-13). Further ahead he continues

the refrain in the same tone, arguing along the same lines: "I was recently taken by this word, as if its uncanniness had just arrived to me in a language that has sounded very familiar to me for a long time" (33). Derrida's equivocal relationship to aporia, I would argue below, can, by extension, apply to the modality of the relationship between Arcadia and the characters, and to the way they have been drawn to or caught up in Arcadia.

Where and What is Barker's Arcadia?

Viewed in the light of the foregoing discussion of aporia, *Ego in Arcadia* projects us onto the problematic of border; it starts on the verge, the verge of death and life. It initiates with a passage in which an ex-queen, Dover, is led by an executioner to be hanged and there looms the aporetic question (or problematic) of borders immediately: borders of the self and socio-political discourse, border of consciousness and corporeality, borders of the flesh of the world and the flesh of the body, borders of the embodied individual and history. Dover challenges Sansom thus: "I'm History…/ Flesh… / And History. (Pause) Separate them, why don't you?" Dover goes on to add: "The acts... / The body... / Part them, can't you?" (269). Irrespective of its being explicitly evocative of Foucault's genealogical discussion of body being and acting as an inscribed surface or palimpsest, this perspicacious attentiveness to the manifold and inextricable tie between the existential-phenomenological and discursive-political is extendable to other characters too.

Another sense in which the characters come to inhabit an aporetic state involves the boundary between life and death which has seemingly been dissolved. More strictly, the characters undergo an unrelenting exposure to the aporia of the impossibility (or absence) of death, because death (as mortality and finitude) - either as a protection (for immersing oneself in the collective They in a flight from one's fundamental solitude and the foreboding prospect of death, or as a last resort for assertion of self-sufficiency in suicide) or as a projection for installing one's life projects in the place of the void or as a prosthesis for denial of death - is denied to them. We will tackle this issue in detail in the next section.

An equally noteworthy quandary is that the characters cannot figure out whether they have fallen into (or arrived in) Arcadia or Arcadia has befallen them. In this regard, Arcadia bears a striking resemblance to death (whether one's own and inherent in one's being or an absolute other

and exterior). Thus, the question that immediately arises is whether the present, yet transitory, inhabitants have wittingly and voluntarily chosen to dwell in Arcadia or has Arcadia selected/lured them; or even whether they have drifted or slipped into Arcadia (as an existential or psychic-mental-spiritual state). The approximate coincidence or synchrony between the uncovering of the painting by Poussin at the outset of the play and the entry of the refugees throws into an intenser ambiguity and relief the question of the origin of the (world of) the play and the characters. We may wonder whether they are vivified or projected subjects of his imagination/painting, or whether these two events are merely partially coincidental, two sheer occurrences placed in a sequence. Regardless of the answer we might pose to the above queries, however, both alternatives enhance the 'facticity' of characters and their ontologically and existentially aporetic state.

We are thus beset with the questions of agency, authority, and boundary in *Arcadia*. When approached as the proprietor or ruler of Arcadia by other characters, Poussin himself firmly repudiates the creation of, or holding sway over, Arcadia. He then proceeds to accord an ontologically pre- or non-subjective provenance and a primordial dimension (inherent to human soul) to Arcadia: "I did not invent Arcadia! No, and who did invent it? We don't know! Perhaps it did not require invention. Perhaps it **struggled to be born with every infant soul!**" (319).

Another determining point concerning Arcadia is raised by Mosca, who in response to Lili's desperate attempts - to stake out the borders of Arcadia and to find, among other things, a mirror and a way out to the world - says: "You can't leave here, Mademoiselle... It's not a sentence, it is a state of mind... you cannot serve it... it is a sickness" (298). This remark resonates with and confirms Poussin's assertion that Arcadia "**struggled to be born with every infant soul!**"; thereby further testifying to the ontological-existential as well as ethical aspects of Arcadia (as aporetic), rather than crudely confining it to spatial terms. This notion of Arcadia as a/n (archaic/primordial and inherent) state of mind gains further accentuation in the distinction Mosca draws between Arcadia as a non-passage (with fluid and tenuous borders) and prison (as an enforced state of literal-physical incarceration, with its solid confines and penal bounds): "no, gaol is simple by comparison… walls, doors, chains and so on ... banal ... (He smiles.) And yet the world is near ... (He listens again. Sounds on the wind.) What was a riot?" (298) Here, what can be inferred from Mosca's observation is that Arcadia is primarily a state of mind. It also illuminates the role and degree of the individual consciousness and will (and lack thereof) regarding the selection of death

or dwelling in Arcadia. Thus Arcadia more than being an actual physical-historical (or even ideological) space, transpires first and foremost as a mental-spiritual (or psychic) space immanent to human psyche/spirit. As such, closely akin to death, Arcadia is peculiar to every individual and yet is pre-individual; hence it resembles death as im-possibility, or the state of death as im-possiblity (of its being one's ownmost possibility).

Exploring the descriptions of Arcadia by the characters demonstrates it to be as volatile, elusive and contradictory as the experience of its transient dwellers. The fundamental features of Arcadia (which are unanimously perceived by all characters) are the (absence or erasure of) death and the compelled prevalence of love; we will delve into both of them at length below. Suffice it for the moment to cite Mosca's remark, in a conversation with Dover, reminiscing about the events in the world prior to his entry into Arcadia, to indicate these features. There Mosca says:

> My guards were minced ... drunk women gouged their eyes and filled the little wells with urine... I wept for them... something made them keep their posts ... honour, was it ... habit... lack of imagination, possibly […] This is Arcadia where nothing lives but love ... and therefore ... is a place of infinite suffering **do you still love me** I am sixty and a statesman with no city... (271).

This twofold character is more palpably distilled in the following excerpt:

> SANSOM: I want to kill you. But I can't. So...
>
> POUSSIN: You will have to love me instead ... (SANSOM stares.) (302)

Throughout *Ego in Arcadia* most characters propose their own interpretation and characterization of Arcadia which, when juxtaposed, turn out to both comply and conflict with one another occasionally to the point of contradiction. They describe Arcadia in terms ranging from beauty and ecstasy to horror, loss, agony, and pain. In a conversation with Le Vig, in which the latter is asking about the possible ways of exiting Arcadia, Poussin identifies Arcadia as a state of ecstasy:

> Le Vig: Can we ... (It thunders again ...)
>
> Poussin: Why? It's ecstasy, surely ... ? (LE VIG shrugs.)
>
> Le Vig: Or not...? (Pause) Leave here ... (Pause)

> Poussin (not removing his eyes from the canvas): Leave...? Why? It's ecstasy, surely...? (Le Vig shrugs.) (288)

Elsewhere Poussin attributes a sublime (and melancholic) "beauty" to Arcadia: "Arcadia ... is ... beauty, then? Intolerable beauty ... ? (Pause) / Believe me, nothing follows from fulfilment but the most mundane ... (Pause) / And ... futile ... (Pause) / Happiness ..." (319).[137] Nevertheless, it is worth noting that beauty - as it figures in the aesthetics of the Theatre of Catastrophe and as evident in Barker's dramatic oeuvre in conjunction with his theoretical writings – is to be conceived in non-Kantian terms of non-reconciliation, non-harmony, discordant formlessness, contradiction, liminality, and ambiguity. In Barker, beauty is associated with intense (spiritual-physical) pain commingled with the sublime (affect)[138], fragmentation of subjective consciousness' an unrepresentable experience of alterity, exteriority, and transgression/sacrifice; it is thus indelibly bound up with an aesthetics of self-overcoming and immanent transcendence, moments of catastrophic event, the clash of will and desire (or reason and desire), and the evental tension between autonomy and heteronomy. Themes which pervade *Ego in Arcadia* too.

Finally, for now, such an aporetic state does not only apply to the ontological and physical conditions of characters, but their existential state too. To put it more lucidly, aporia extends to both the life of the characters (the frustration of their pursuit of self-abnegation oblivion, and relief through death, love, and mundane mediocrity) and to their death; they have wandered, or are set adrift, in a place that ostensibly offers no exit or path to transcendence, and even, to aggravate the

[137] And as we know beauty in Barker is associated with (connotations) anxiety, death, pain, knowledge, and spirituality. Barker establishes a relationship between the tragic and the art of the theatre which, in his view, lends anxiety, creates beauty, and abolishes clarity: "Death in the art of the theatre is the condition of beauty and anxiety the price of its revelation" (Barker, *Death* 26). In *The Europeans* also one of the characters proposes his existential tenets in terms of The Triple Order of the Groaning God comprising: beauty, cruelty and knowledge (108). The moment of beauty in Barker's theatre is the moment of collision between official and unofficial, carnival and catastrophe, the moment of collapse of moral certitudes (Barker, *Arguments* 59). Barker also emphasizes how beauty in his theatre is intimately linked with the pervert, the devious irrational and instinctive: "In the art of theatre beauty is characterized by its brevity, its instability, its ill-health. Whereas death is the nightmare of cheerless democracies, abolished from consciousness by the nauseating complicity of medicine and leisure, death in the art of theatre is the condition of beauty and anxiety the price of its revelation. Would you be seduced effortlessly?" (Barker 2005, 25–6)

[138] In this regard see also K. Gritzner's "Towards an Aesthetic of the Sublime" in which she, contentiously, approaches Barker's drama in terms of the Kantian concept of the sublime. There, Gritzner describes the sublime element in Barker as "an aesthetic experience of indeterminacy in an encounter with eros and death – aesthetic in the sense that it is an experience conscious of itself, therefore not spontaneous but deferred" (90).

adversities, offers no relief in the form of self-willed death. As such, Arcadia (as an aporetic state and space) plunges the characters into an interminable experience of, on the one hand, an impossibility of the assumption, or leading, of a self-centered life and solipsistic (including narcissism and melancholia) self/world, and, on the other, of the impossibility of the transcendence of, coupled with the overriding urgency for the transgression of, the egocentric self. The thrust of this strain of Arcadia (and its existential-ontological implications) evinces itself conspicuously at two juncture where the expression "Pure / Pure Arcadia" is enunciated. In both instances, the two characters who reach that point out of which the expression is wrenched have been among the most adamant and intransigent characters in their egocentricity and convictions; characters who are insulated to alteration and self-overcoming .

In the first instance, Sleen who, as he firmly declares, has never been in love, is so smitten with Dover's love and thus unable to cease pining for her, that he breaks out of his habitual husk and ventures into divesting himself off all his defence mechanisms and accustomed "weapons" (linguistic and temperamental, including irony, sarcasm, cynicism, apathy/antipathy and an indifferent contempt, which are indeed his means of self-preservation, of precluding others from approaching him, and of eschewing authentic engagement with immediate reality around him). Thus, he capitulates to a genuine self-exposure, self-submission, placing himself vulnerable to being rebuffed by proposing his love to Dover:

> So this is — (He falters.) What? / The foredoomed and futile statement of a faith.- / Pure / Pure / Arcadia ... […] I reverence / I discard every weapon of contempt / Which leaves me naked / *Naked and absurd* / Old / Fatuous / But not so full not so replete with knowledge that I stand back from my hopelessness that would be death, surely? Ex-Queen of somewhere / I am not actually ashamed / The first time / Possibly / To / Adore (305; italics mine)

Premised on the dramatic context and reverberative associations (such as "naked", "absurd" and "statement of a faith") of this phrase, "Pure / Pure Arcadia" can here be construed to mean, and entail, impassioned passivity, susceptibility, exposure to alterity and freedom towards the other/death, all enacted genuinely and without any restraint or consideration for self-preservation. This passage also illustrates the fact that Arcadia itself (owing to the conditions dominant in it) - by denying the possibility of death as self-withdrawal into total identity and autonomy (apparently endowed by death through suicide) and encouraging love as, I would argue,

a catastrophic hetero-affectivity and a heteronomous relationality involving the sacrifice of the spurious sovereignty of the self - has provided the impulse for the occurrence of this moment of painful self-excoriation and self-excendence. The idiosyncrasies and implications of love, as characterized above, find their most reverberant articulations in two passages by two different characters. Dover's remark starkly captures the process of excendence and dehiscence of the self in love as a heteronomous process of becoming and unfolding in an evocative imagery: "I must sit in the sun I must expose myself to rain and all my qualities will crack and chip and wash away like ancient temples in the sand you are the sun you are the rain I will submit to every weather of indifference I shan't know myself but you will witness it I do not pester I merely decay… (She is still.) I love you. [...] Silently [...]" (301). Poussin equally cogently corroborates the characteristics of love as a catastrophic affectivity) as delineated above: "It is the absolute of love ... that you would turn yourself inside out ... and maim your very perfect parts . . . and hack your soul ... for another who remains...implacable" (300).

The second instance of manifestation occurs on the occasion of the song contest. When Mosca's hope for attaining Dover's love is irreparably dashed, and his existential and affective crisis reaches a momentum; in consequence, he relinquishes his obsession with sanity and solicitude about dignity and social image/status, and participates in the song contest as an act of genuine self-exposure and expression of a willingness to die. In a paroxysm of memory and desire, Mosca delivers a song which acts as a vector of becoming-intense (see Deleuze and Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus* 260-307) through which he reaches both in-volution and re-volution to the extent that Poussin, who has tended to be either aloof and indifferent or witheringly provocative, pays homage to him by drawing him:

> I found nothing / I found nothing / Gratification eluded me / Cunt / Cunt / A corridor of self again / What hangs on the womb's wall but mirrors I walked through men / I rode through men / Autumn leaves / Autumn showers / A Queen found me / And shaped the formless hours / Axeman / Axeman / The years have stripped bark from my tree / Naked wood / All naked wood / Axeman / Deliver me... (312)

No sooner have these evocative words been uttered by Mosca than Poussin exclaims: "I drew you ... / I so rarely draw from life ... / But I drew you ... / Pure / Pure / Arcadia ..." (313). In

the wake of this evental moment, Mosca asserts that he has conquered Arcadia (Ibid.) and does not want to die. Moments later, Poussin further eulogizes Mosca by saying: "You perfect human being / Embrace me / You are so human you are a god / Kiss me!" (315).[139] The abovementioned intensely poetic piece with its disjunctive and paratactic language reflects Mosca's crisis-ridden mind and feeling, and presents a distilled vignette of the genealogy of his selfhood as finite and in a flux of "ever-changing sameness"[140] (Adorno 1974, 238); in other words, the continuity of his self through discontinuities before the decisive encounter with Dover. The song delivered by Mosca transpires as a moment of epiphany about the human condition and human nature. It, in effect, enunciates the ubiquity of one's ego to the point of the impossibility of self-transcendence and self-divestiture in conjunction with a profound craving to be untrammelled from such a state.

This lyrical passage indeed cogently captures two pivotal points of the play. Firstly, human self (the individual ego) is depicted as a solipsistic (foreclosed upon itself and a totality of infinite self-reflection with rare evental possibilities of excendance). Secondly, even the erotic/sexual relationship (unlike Levinas's view in *Totality and Infinity*) does not offer a way out of this cul-de-sac. Significantly, the only release from self-sameness and self-insistence, as claimed in this passage, resides in the authentic/catastrophic love developed between the self and the Other (reached eventually, as Mosca professes, when "A Queen found me / And shaped the formless hours"). If we are to elicit our inkling from Poussin's remark to Mosca, in Arcadia the characters find themselves irremediably caught in an aporia or a double-bind. On the one hand, confronted with the Arcadian conditions the characters' primary choice is to continue to cling to their inauthentic ways of relating to the world they inhabit, to their self, and to the Other. On the other hand, given their being ineluctably and irreversibly plunged into Arcadian circumstances - characterized by its aporetic state of death, evental-catastrophic force of love, and the erasure of the quotidian world of entities and identities, hence, the obliteration of mundane social and

[139] Barker establishes a relation between tragic innocence, ontological inadequacy and the condition of perfectly human as follows: "There is no innocent tragedy, only innocent accident. Yet is it not innocent to rage at the world for its inadequacy? Perhaps, but between the complacency of the stoic and the complacency of the social reformer, such an innocence acquires the status of the *perfectly human* ..." (*DOAT* 63).

[140] Though borrowing this cogent phrase from Adorno (who poses it in a context about culture industry, consumer culture, social reification and aesthetic commodification and fetishism), I am deploying the phrase in a different context and meaning; more clearly, my use is less inflected with socio-cultural and historical critical implications, and more existentially and perceptually oriented. Here is the more complete form of Adorno's statement: "Today the appeal to newness, of no matter what kind... has become universal. [...] The decomposition of the subject is consummated in the self-abandonment to an ever-changing sameness" (1974, 238).

personal props, notions, and shields (linguistic and emotional) which they utilized to avert genuine exposure to self-knowledge, the possibility of alteration, and otherwise-than-being - they experience an excruciatingly bare exposure to the other and a consequential encounter with their self. As a result, realizing the extent to which they are riveted to their being (as ego or sovereign selfhoods), and feeling suffocated by it, they are led to a stage where they become intent on escaping being (to wit, being irrevocably oneself and tied to one's essence/ego) either through an inauthentic reversion into a state of selflessness, self-abnegation, and nothingness (which is denied to them) or through a more authentic encounter with their being (and selfhood) via self-expression/composition and, crucially, love. Love in *Arcadia* (as I will extensively demonstrate below) entails a pure state of genuine exposure to a painful rupture of egocentrism (discernible in the forms of melancholia, narcissism and aristocratic or average bourgeois egoism), and heteronomy through pain and love. In fact, in *Arcadia*, in the moment of amorous proximity with the Other: "the an-archic identity of the subject [is] flushed out without being able to slip away" (*OB* 144).

In this regard, the existential and ethical implications of the points expounded above can be further unraveled when considered in relation to Levinas' rigorous phenomenological reflections on the emerging into full subjecthood of the self (through hypostasis) out of the il y a (Levinas' term for brute being) and preceding its encounter with alterity. Having distinguished between one's being and one's world, Levinas posits that anterior and more originary is one's relation with being. When in il y a, the self is immersed in the impersonal, alienating, and anonymous flow of being and self's relations with world are sundered. In *Existence and Existents* (henceforth *EE*), and elsewhere in *On Escape*, Levinas describes a relation to being beyond Heidegger's opposition of authentic and inauthentic existence and as one which is antecedent to being-in-the-world. Only after suspending this relation to world can the "primary relationship which binds us to being [l'être] become palpable" (*EE* 21). Levinas' description of the relation to il y a has a resonant bearing on the conditions permeating Barker's *Arcadia*: "For where the continual play of our relations with the world is interrupted we find neither death nor the "pure ego," but the anonymous state of being". (*EE* 21)

Rather than taking his point of departure from the assumption of an originary "being-in-the-world" (whether authentic or inauthentic), Levinas initiates with the postulation of an original duality and a corresponding necessity for escape and excendence:

> Existence is an absolute that is asserted without reference to anything else. It is identity. But in this reference to himself [soi-meme], man perceives a type of duality. His identity with himself loses the character of a logical or tautological form; it takes on a dramatic form, as we will demonstrate. In the identity of the I [ego, moi], the identity of being reveals its nature as enchainment, for it appears in the form of suffering and invites us to escape. Thus, escape is the need to get out of oneself, that is *to break that most radical and unalterably binding of chains, the fact that the I [ego, moi] is oneself* [*soi-meme*]. (*On Escape* 55; italics original)

It is owing to being burdened with such an inexorable state that the individual seeks "excendence" or escape (evasion) towards the exteriority. Levinas, in a trenchant critique of the bourgeois conception of the self-sufficient ego whose inner stability and self-possession arises from possession and security and whose concern for the future is translated into demands of guarantee from the present,[141] ascribes a state of distressing unease, horror, embarrassment, and shame of sovereign solitude to the hypostatized self. Excendence thus designates the desire or drive to surpass the ontological imperialism of being (as the principle of self-identity and self-continuity) and the confines of the authoritarian self: "Thus, to the need for escape, being appears not only as an obstacle that free thought would have to surmount, nor even as the rigidity that, by inviting us to routine, demands an effort toward originality; rather it appears as an imprisonment

[141] As Levinas argues: "This conception of the "I" [moi] as self-sufficient is one of the essential marks of the bourgeois spirit and its philosophy. As sufficiency for the petit bourgeois, this conception of the 'I' nonetheless nourishes the audacious dreams of a restless and enterprising capitalism. This conception presides over capitalism work ethic, its cult of initiative and discovery, which aims less at reconciling man with himself than at securing for him the unknowns of time and things".
Levinas adds a crucial characterization: "The bourgeois admits no inner division and would be ashamed to lack confidence in himself, but he is concerned about reality and the future, for they threaten to break up the uncontesred equilibrium of the present where he holds sway. He is essentially conservative, but there is a worried conservatism. The bourgeois is concerned with business matters and science as a defense against things and all that is unforeseeable in them. His instinct for possession is an instinct for integration, and his imperialism is a search for security" (*On Escape* 50).

from which one must get out" (54-55).[142] The notable point is that excendence features and the precondition and preamble to transcendence of the self towards the infinite alterity of the Other.

Relatedly, another decisive point which not only corroborates the aforementioned arguments in relation to Barker's *Arcadia*, but raises the urgency of the question of the egoism (selfhood) in *Arcadia* to a more prominent level is another remark by Mosca stated preceding his song: "I don't think so ... much as I wish it might be ... rather I think it is ... oh, Anna ... self-regard ... was **that Idiot, mine...?** (He laughs, a resigned laugh.) Ego ... in ... Arcadia ... (He falls forward, leaning on his hands on the table and sings, crudely, tunelessly.)" (312). This statement is the only place where the terms "ego" and "Arcadia" (as appearing in the title) are explicitly juxtaposed. The passage not only lays bare the main tension on which the play hinges, but unveils what is at stake in the latent relation between ego and Arcadia. The foremost point, in this concern, is that the word "Ego" in the title of the play- *Ego in Arcadia* - as becomes fleetingly manifest in Mosca's speech – primarily designates subjective "ego", or the egoity of the individual, as wielded and conceived in philosophy and psychoanalysis[143] in the sense of total self-immediacy, self-sufficiency and self-identity. Accordingly, in Arcadia (as in il y a), the (egoistic) self proves to be that irrevocable component or residue that cannot be totally abandoned. In the above excerpt, Mosca is wavering between participating in the song contest by undertaking a genuine act of self-exposure and risking "making a fool of himself" on the one hand, and maintaining his "dignity" and "manners", on the other. In the meantime, Dover (Anna), moved by a residual love and the memory of their previous social status, tries to deter him. Notwithstanding all inhibitions, Mosca forgoes his self-concern and capitulates to an act of "Saying", during which the totality of the self bleeds into infinity (or exteriority), the ego is deposed, and abandons its drive to sovereignty. This is achieved solely through pursuing an ethical (heteronomously related) aesthetic of the self.[144]

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[142] The crucial point, however, is that excendence should not be conflated with literary/artistic yearning for the fantastic; nor with the Romantic aspiration to break with the social convention; nor even the poet's dream of evading a degraded reality (*On Escape* 53).

[143] The archetypal and founding example of this ego can be identified in Descartes's "cogito ergo sum", Kant's idealist subject and Husserl's transcendental ego. As regards psychoanalysis, Lacan differentiates between ego and subject in which the former belongs to the Imaginary and the latter to the Symbolic.

[144] Levinas both affirms the necessity of the presence of ego and scathingly critiques it. As Levinas says: "Egoism, enjoyment, sensibility, and all the dimensions of interiority – as the articulations of separation – are necessary for the idea of Infinity – for the relation with the Other, which opens forth from the separate and finite being" (*TI* 148). Although Levinas argues that the subject is "a being absolutely closed over upon itself" (*TI* 148), he however conditions (nuances) this statement by adding or acknowledging that "this closedness of the separated being... be ambiguous enough" to make possible a certain exposure and opening (*TI* 148).

As such Arcadia offers a way through and beyond aporia (though not dissolving it, since aporia is demonstrated to be an integral and indispensable feature of existence) between the double-bind of depersonalization (self-dissolution) and self-immurement (self-imprisonment or immersion in one's self exemplified by narcissism and melancholia). The aporia of the need to escape oneself (as the subsistence of a core self and a stable subjectivity given to conatus essendi), instigated and accentuated by Arcadian characters being deprived of their (socio-symbolic and existential-ontological) mooring points are pushed to a point (the song contest) where they can either fail or manage to subject to heteronomous relationality through exposure to the event, the Other, and aesthetic contingency of the self. Accordingly, they undertake and undergo an experience of de-subjectivation and, possibly, re-subjectivation by recognizing the necessity of, and yielding to the other-than-the-self, self-as-the-other, self-as-becoming, an endless and impossible experience). It consists in exploring, through the pains of love and the impossibility of death, the brutality of the totality of egology and ontology. Arcadia paves the way for the exposure to and encounter with the unexpected arrivant[145] and its ramifications beyond the circle of one's world, self and knowledge: "But if the new arrivant who arrives is new, one must expect – without waiting. Such an arrivant affects the very experience of threshold, whose possibility he thus begins to light before one even knows whether there has been an invitation, a call, a nomination, or a promise" (*Aporias* 33).

To conclude this section on the ontological dimensions of aporia in *Ego in Arcadia* and Barker's (middle and later) drama, apart from the aporetic border between death and life, I would argue that such textual moments of beginning and ending in *Ego in Arcadia*, coupled with numerous other moments interspersed throughout the text, constitute its mise-en-abyme[146]

[145]The determining feature that distinguishes Derrida's arrivant from Levinas's l'autrui (relating to whom poses the possibility of self-transcendence and becoming-other, substitution, and proximity) is that Derrida does not presuppose or posit an essential peacefulness and goodness of alterity; nor does he exclude/rule out its being violent or colonizer. – "[since the] absolute arrivant does not yet have a name or an identity [...] its place of arrival is also de-identified" (). Implicitly invoking the concepts of originary mourning and originary trace (of temporality as hetero-affectivity of non-identical relationship with infinitely other or different), Derrida describes the arrivant further thus: "As disarmed as a newly-born child, it no more commands than is commanded by the memory of some originary event where the archaic is bound with the final extremity, with the finality par excellence of the telos or of the eskhaton. It even exceeds the order of any determinable promise. […] Now the border that is ultimately most difficult to delineate, because it is always already crossed, lies in the fact that the absolute arrivant makes possible everything to which I have just said it cannot be reduced" (*Aporias* 34).

[146] Mise-en-abyme, literally meaning 'placement in abyss, was originally adapted from ancient heraldry, designating a device whereby a shield has a smaller copy of itself represented on its surface that in turn has a smaller copy of itself on its surface, giving an impression of an ad infinitum reflection/repetition. "In literary parlance, the mise en abyme

moments which are both performative and self-reflexive as well as descriptive-dramatic. Such aporetic moments, by invoking the fictional possibility of a particular finite world, ground Barker's own narratives within the space of that possibility. By asserting their own (aporetic) freedom, as it were, Barker's plays legislate for their own autonomy as literary artefacts; and yet, when they strenuously endeavour to carry out this project, they are necessarily faced with a fundamental paradox.

To couch such acts or instants in terms of aporia, indeed, since the possibility of every act of foundation is always already predicated on an absence of foundation preceding it, beginnings and endings can only be conceived in their own absence. As such, in Barker, the possibility of absolute autonomy both existentially and ontologically – in relation to the self and the art/text world - as claimed by critics, is undermined. To put it more lucidly, all acts of foundation, be it an act of ontological grounding, of aesthetic framing, or ethical injunction, are invariably and always already conditioned with the necessary circumstance of their own prior absence and have to confront or accommodate it; such a precedent space defies the determination of sovereign agency. Additionally, there is also their fraught and ambivalent relation to the allegedly real or reality (at once as an independent beyond, an intervention, and an extension). As such, the act of foundation remains irreducibly violent, equivocal, and nebulous (see also Derrida "Violence and Metaphysics"[147]); and it is as though the fictional/dramatic world which Barker's work opens up already has its distant origin elsewhere, in an unfathomable and irretrievable anteriority that resists dramatic and narrative exposition and veils the clarity of the text in impenetrable, indeterminate opacity. Such a treatment is evocative of and congruent with Blanchot's account of literary space

[...] is meant to designate the way in which the operations of reading and writing are represented in the text, and in advance, as it were, of any other possible reading." (From the translator's introduction to Derrida's *Signdponge/Signsponge*, ix). For the discussion of the interplay of abime, s'abimer, and mise en abyme, see Derrida's *Signdponge/Signsponge*. For a more extended explanation of the figure in literary theory, see Lucien Dallenbach, *The Mirror in the Text* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), in particular 41-116.

[147] "What is the origin of the question about transcendental archi-factuality as violence? Upon what basis does one ask questions about finitude and/as violence? Upon what basis does the original violence of discourse permit itself to be commanded to be returned to itself, to be always, as language, the return itself which recognises the other as other? […] of course, one cannot answer these questions […] except by undertaking a new discourse which once more will seek to justify transcendental phenomenology. But the naked opening of the question, its silent opening, escapes phenomenology, as the origin and end of phenomenology's logos" (Derrida, *Writing and Difference* 133)

and the origin of the literary work in *The Space of Literature*; a disastrous and dis-unifying space which is more explicitly and consistently delved into in *Hurts Given and Received* and *Blok/Eko*.[148]

Highly analogous moments of mise-en-abyme can also be detected in *Scenes from an Execution*, *Terrible Mouth*, *I Saw Myself*, and *A Rich Woman's Poetry*. In *Terrible Mouth*, to give one example, Goya (the Spanish painter), who is in an intensely abstruse relationship with the Duchess of Alba (at once his beloved, mistress, and patroness) is featured as riven with a fundamental rupture in his existential-artistic selfhood and life. This split has been literalized and dramatized in the play to the point where we observe two dramatic characters/entities, that is, Goya and Goya's voice. This literalized split, or duality, provides conspicuous moments of (aesthetic, ethical, and existential) self-reflexivity and complicity not only for Goya and Barker, but also for the audience. They are thus implicated (in the duality and disparity lying at the heart of Goya) and strained to such an extent that the tensions and contradictions - including affective and psychological-existential complexities, collusion, violence and power relations inherent in the acts of aesthetic framing, artistic vision, act of witnessing/watching, and artistic modeling - evince themselves more perceptibly. Nevertheless here, unlike Beckett's *Catastrophe*, for instance, we do not witness a representation of victimhood and a straightforward depiction of the subjection of the actor/character to disciplinary aesthetic imperatives and authoritative norms, an unobtrusive act of resistance (actor's gaze), and the revelation of relations of power at stake in art as an institution. Goya has a catastrophic imagination and longs for hazarding, even sacrificing, his selfhood, his love relationship, and morality to examine himself, his medium, and his lover in extremis). Driven by the urge to be "rinsed in some extremity" (5), he decides "to see [his] love in pain" (8). Thus Goya asks Alba, who is determined to match and even surpass Goya in terms of imaginative and transgressive reach as well as intensity of love, to yield to an enforced sexual intercourse (in effect, a rape) with a liberal man who hates the aristocracy. Sacrificing such an intensely invested relationship and affective attachment as that to one's beloved approximates an act of self-sacrifice and reflection on oneself while suffering violence. This point is confirmed in the refrain-like passage, interspersed throughout the play, which is reiterated by both Goya and Goya's Voice. The latter says: "They take me for a / Satirist / They take me for a moralist / But

[148] It is this structure that accounts for Derrida's argument that "the origin of literature at the same time as the origin of the law" is "not an event in the ordinary sense of the word" but a "quasi-event" that is "the simulacrum of narration and not only... the narration of an imaginary history" (199).

nothing that I paint am I not swimming in" (8). And the former: "They call me a moralist. They call me a satirist. / I must warn you I am in the deed itself" (15). Goya's aporetic position and overdetermined gaze indeed epitomize the mise-en-abyme situation of the artist who at once forms and deforms, suffers and inflicts suffering (the latter of each pair is literalized when Goya starts painting by surgical instruments). In a reverberative utterance, Goya states: "**To watch is love**" (17) but "pain is necessary" (7).

In a similar vein, *Ego in Arcadia* in a mise-en-abyme manner reflects the ontological aporias inherent in Tragedy of Catastrophe as regards its relation with the (socio-symbolic) world, with death and with existential life/world of the individual audience. In the following passage Barker not only enunciates an ontologically aporetic situation and position for his tragic art of theatre, but extends them to characters (and actors embodying/impersonating them) too. In this light, the world of Theatre of Catastrophe and the characters therein, I would suggest, can be argued to be nomadic (nomos) space/entities mediating between life and death on the one hand, and between polis, logos, and chaos (see Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* 351-423) occasionally proceeding to the brink of chaos, on the other:

> The play only appears to be about the living because the actors are living. The *characters* have never lived, nor by the same token, can they ever be said to be *dead*. Theatre is situated on the bank of the Styx (the side of the living).The actually dead cluster at the opposite side, begging to be recognized. What is it they have to tell? Their mouths gape ... (20)

II. Aporias of Death in *Arcadia*: Death and Its Facets in Barker's Work

Barker's works are replete not only with the death-obsessed, but also with the dead. Barker's tragic protagonists transpire as not only death-bound subjects whose concern is the attainment of autonomy the intensification of existence, language, and sensibility towards an experience of the impossible, but subjects whose being-towards-death is teeming with catastrophic events that open up the possibility of a different aesthetics of the self (-overcoming) and an ethics of relation to

exteriority and alterity. In *Found in the Ground*, Burgteata, a young lady who impulsively sleeps with the dying and perceives it as her duty, ponders the consequences of preoccupation with death, consequences which are, by extension, true of many other Barker characters: “But if you flirt with Death it pesters you / (Pause.) / It comes into your room / (Pause.) / It doesn't wait for invitations / (Pause. She laughs.) / AND NOT ONLY DEATH” (190). Holofernes, in *Judith*, on the eve of the war he is waging on Israel, finds himself ineluctably drawn to a contemplation of death and its arbitrary nature as the sole worthwhile subject: “Tonight I must talk about death. For example, its arbitrary selections. This I find impossible to assimilate. [...] This haunts me, this casualness. [...] I might say this quality in death has governed my emotions and made battle precious” (243). He proceeds to affirm the immanence of death in life and its being essentially ingrained in all its facets: “I think it is the persistence and proximity of Death, who lurks in all the interstices of life and cannot be abolished, which justifies the military profession” (246). In *Dead Hands* the looming presence of the corpse of the father lying under a shroud on a table occupies the centre stage and overshadows the action and dynamics of the whole play. In *He Stumbled* the corpse of the king - featuring as the inter-affective fulcrum of the play and being ritualistically dissected on the stage by the physician-protagonist - serves to reveal not only the nature of interpersonal intimacy, but also the essential ambiguity and inter-corporeal nature of human body/embodiment; it also illustrates how embodiment, intimacy/proximity, and relationality all dissolve, and are refractory to, the atomizing assaults made on it under the rubric of transparency imperatives by disciplines such as medicine and political morality of dominant discourse/ideology. Photo in *Fence in its Thousandth Year* finds death as the most fundamental dimension of human life and finding the way “to enter it beautifully” as his (and his aunt’s) sole preoccupation: “let us eschew the conventional in this as in every other instance and create our own deaths in dying beautifully one lives forever so few possess the imagination but I do I think about it all the time” (*FTY* 21-22). Photo continues to intimate his vision to Doorway “Death is something for which one really must prepare of course this does not preclude the possibility of mayhem chaos accident making a mockery of the most fastidious arrangements […]” (*FTY* 23). And finally, this trend finds its emblematic intensity and manifoldness (given its being associated with spirituality, nakedness, desire, and murder) in Queen’s culminating words in *Knowledge and Girl*: “Death yes / Death I ran towards / Death in every cupboard / Death on every stair / I have met men in cupboards / I

have met men on stairs / And this peculiar / UNDRESSING / What is it but a waiting to be killed?" (129).

To apprehend the idiosyncratic and distinct nature of death in Barker's work, it is instructive to see how, from a certain perspective, Barker's conception of death stands in incisive contrast to, and diverges from, Herbert Marcuse's. Marcuse decries "the ontological affirmation of death"[149] as pathological, reifying (ideologically-induced), and repressive, postulating the "ideology of death" and "ideological exhortation to death" (69) to have been propagated by Western capitalist ideology and the philosophical morality which justifies and bolsters it. Marcuse also regards the rampant turn to death and suicide as a protest against the plights and privations inflicted by social-historical conditions, or as a political reaction that emanates from the aggravation of oppression and frustrations (see 69); thus, calling for demystification of death as a metaphysical necessity (see 64-7). Barker, on the other hand, often presents the tragic character as one who embraces death affirmatively, volitionally, unflinchingly - even avidly - impelled either by "an authentic desire for the unknown" (*DOAT* 38) or by the realization of the "poverty of existence" (6) and the inadequacy of the world (as regards the dimensions of human knowledge, imagination, and desire as well as the possibilities of transgressive experience, relating (to the Other), and expression/language) (33, 63, 99). Crucially, as Barker asserts, this gesture or step by the tragic protagonist does not stem from an impulse towards circumventing life or shunning the distresses and rigors of it, but is rather carried out either due to harboring an intense (ontological and epistemological) desire for death (as the ultimate Unknown), or in contempt of life's insufficiency or its inadequacy: "Tragedy's engagement is with death, but from the deepest encounter with life" (56). Barker repudiates the attempts to reductively tie this valorization of concern with death in tragedy to a masochistic acedia or a symptomatic morbidity instigated by socio-political or existential failure or deficiencies; contrarily, he ascribes it to an excess of imagination, vitality and autonomy: "The tragic protagonist is not tired of life, nor thwarted, both conditions which provide pretexts for *evasion*

[149] Marcuse distinguishes between two general trends of thought, or attitudes, towards death which have tended to dominate Western though "In the history of Western thought, the interpretation of death has run the whole gamut from the notion of a mere natural fact, pertaining to man as organic matter, to the idea of death as the telos of life, the distinguishing feature of human existence. From these two opposite poles, two contrasting ethics may be derived; On the one hand, the attitude toward death is stoic or skeptic acceptance of the inevitable, or even the repression of the thought of death by life; on the other hand the idealistic glorification of death is that which gives "meaning" to life, or is the precondition for the "true" life of man…" ("The Ideology of Death", in H. Feifel (ed.). *The Meaning of Death*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959, 6-26).

[...] On the contrary, he has an *excess of existence* to his credit, both of a material and spiritual kind" (84).

Death constitutes the raison d'être of Barker's Theatre of Catastrophe and features as a multifaceted and essentially inscrutable phenomenon and non-phenomenon (not phenomenologically perceptible and representable, belonging to the order of enigma, secret, and silence) in his work. Barker refers to his Art of Theatre as "crucially an art of death" (7) and, endowing it with an ontologically liminal position, locates his theatre on the bank of the river which serves as the border between the dead and the living (20). He declares tragedy as "the labour of death" and characterizes tragic art primarily as an art which promotes the "feeling for death" (65). Resonant with Schopenhauer's attestation to the pivotal role of death in human life and thought - referring to death as "the true inspiring genius, or the muse of philosophy", averring: "Indeed without death men could scarcely philosophize" (*World as Will and Representation* 463) – Barker discerns death as the most fundamental and at once formidable subject of art and philosophy, asserting: "Death is the subject of all philosophy and all theatre" (18). Evocative of later Freud's postulation ("life is a detour to death"[150]) and Heidegger's ontological-existential consideration of death as both imminent and immanent "Tragedy's a priori – that we live only to be destroyed by life – renders the notion of *wrong decisions* meaningless" (97). Equally crucial, Barker places his theatre and drama beyond the pleasure principle (literally and figuratively). He accomplished this both in an ideological-aesthetic respect - by strenuously refuting and arraigning late capitalist tenets such as pleasure principle (1, 3, 13), as "an organizing principle of existence" (3), use and exchange value, and the consumerist culture - and ontologically/aesthetically. Regarding the latter, he maintains that poring over death, (re)presentation of death, and probing into its elusive and abstruse recesses, are the indispensable tasks and concerns of serious art: "Death is the preoccupation of great art even where it is not the subject of it" (7); accordingly, he decries the art that refuses, or fails to incorporate, or open itself up to, death, and declares itself an "instrument for living" (18), as idealist, impotent, and inauthentic (*DOAT* 3).

[150] As Freud says: "Seen in this light, the theoretical importance of the drives of self-preservation, of self-assertion and of mastery greatly diminishes […] We have no longer to reckon with the organism's puzzling determination to maintain its own existence in the face of every obstacle. What we are left with is the fact that the organism wishes to die only in its own fashion.' Self-preservative drives are conservative drives, because they ensure that the organism will die only in its own fashion" (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 39).

Barker's engagement with death can be discerned to be propelled by a multiplicity of motives and to include diverse dimensions: existential, ontological, ideological-discursive, and phenomenological-ethical (inter-subjective or relational, in turn, intertwined with desire, eroticism, sacrifice, and transgression). Barker strives to purge death of disciplinary appropriation as well as shackles of familiarity, and to release it from the attempts to neutralize, ironize, domesticate, or humanize it (*DOAT* 101-2).[151] Barker's valorization of concern with death, however, should not be restricted to a morbid-melancholic obsession of tragedy with possibility of reaching the ultimate unknown and the possibility of initiation into a beyond. Contrarily, Barker is preoccupied with the way death comes to exert an indelible influence on and wreak profound alterations in life and the living; tragedy "draws death into life and thereby alters it" (94). Barker's *Death, the One* and many of his plays are replete with vignettes and scenes in which the proximity to death (be it through the beloved's death, intense and sublime eroticism, one's fatal disease, one's realization of deficiency and absurdity of life, or being haunted with nothingness) coupled with its bearing on human life and embodied consciousness (in affective, existential-ontological, and inter-subjective or ethical terms) are starkly depicted. Lvov's sacrificial death, and its indelible impact on the lives of his disciples, in *The Last Supper* is an emblematic example. Death, in Barker's treatment of it, is indissociably merged with desire, the One (as the Other), and seduction (associated with secret and silence); it is also bound up with anxiety, pain and loss. The ensuing passage serves as an emblematic instance:

> '*Forgive my dying ...*'. Could anything be more pitiful than this adieu of the loved to the stricken-with-grief? '*Forgive my dying*' not because you love me only, but because I am/ have been the world as you knew it, and my absence (the first and last appreciable fact of death) alters your world, it is an injury done to your world, whatever your judgement of *me* ... (*DOAT* 59).

Furthermore, Barker not only attests to the fundamental relation between anxiety and death - the revealing role of anxiety in instilling consciousness of one's finitude and being stretched

[151] There Barker states: "The tragic character manipulates not only the private but also the public attributes of death – its *collective disciplines* – for death has not only been co-opted as a punitive instrument of the social order (the now defunct 'death-penalty'...) but we must now recognize that the *domestication of death* is the ideological foundation of the democratic system (the sickly obsession with health and consequently, *longevity*...). In abandoning his life, the tragic character shows his contempt for the collective neurosis. In this he has unwittingly acquired political significance..." (101-2).

to/over nothingness coupled with the emergence of a cataclysmic anxiety as a consequence of manifest display of death – but also insists on anxiety as the "privilege" (36) and a precious gift of his art of the theatre for its audience "*The theatre* purports to give pleasure to the many. *The art of theatre* lends anxiety to the few. Which is the greater gift?" (1). Far from restricting anxiety to death or tragedy, he asserts: "anxiety is an inextinguishable feature of existence" (54). To Barker, anxiety lays bare the stark existential finitude, contingency, and ontological freedom and solitariness of the individual. Hence, for Barker, "death [...] is the condition of beauty and anxiety the price of its revelation" (26), and in his art of theatre "anxiety is elevated over all things except beauty" (25). Barker opposes anxiety to pleasure (linked with resolution, and promotes it as a distinguishing feature of his art of theatre: "In *the art of theatre* we recoil from the idea of satisfaction, either of the public or of ourselves. Satisfaction derives from resolution. Nothing in *the art of theatre* tends towards resolution. We elevate anxiety over all things but *beauty*" (25).

He postulates the immanence of death in life (their inextricability and being mutually constitutive in addition to the fact that one's attitude towards death determines one's existential and ethical stance in life) as the condition of possibility of not just tragic experience or sensibility, but human existence in general: "The play of *the theatre* asks *how shall we live*? The tragedy asks *how should we die*? But where is the antithesis, for the tragedy answers the question *how shall we live* in the very act of exposing the way into death" (94).

Another pivotal characteristic of death in Barker is that it primarily concerns the individual; it sunders the individual from his spurious attachments to the collective and individualizes the subject by confronting him with his fundamental solitude and facticity and revealing the possibility of autonomy. Indeed, the eventful encounter with existential anonymity of non-being and the prospect of one's nothingness triggers individuation and a movement towards authentic selfhood. As Barker notes: "Ourselves and the deaths of others. How much can we say? That no amount of witnessing the *dying* of others prepares us for the experience of *death* in ourselves. Do these others – whilst *dying* – share a *death*, or do they experience *deaths* as variously as they experienced their lives?" (42). By the same token, Barker underscores "death's contempt for the collective" and insists on assuming an authentic approach (of genuine exposure to, unconditioned desire for, the unknown) by the tragic protagonist; authenticity here, congruent with Heidegger, is defined by autonomy, anxiety-laden "being-free-for" and being-towardness" first and foremost manifested in

"freedom-towards-death"[152]: "To die ... to go into the darkness ... if it *is* darkness ... to go to the river ... if it *is* a river ... but alone and without the illusion of love ... naked and *disastrously free* ... this is the condition of the tragic character ..." (104-5)

As is evident in the foregoing account of the role of death in Barker, his affinities with Heidegger, among others, in this regard are conspicuous and extensive. In order to delineate and discern various dimensions of death in Barker's aesthetic and his contribution to the (innovative departure from) European avant-garde literature concerning existential and ontological issue such as death (and its correlates) in an articulated way, I present a schematic discussion of Heidegger's stance on death so as to elaborate upon the points of convergence between Barker and Heidegger and their significance and ramification in Barker's catastrophic aesthetics and ontology. Then I will proceed to demonstrate how Barker - both generally, and in *Ego in Arcadia* more particularly - in certain determining respects departs from a Heideggerian standpoint, and begins to evince a notable overlapping, variously[153], with Levinas, Derrida, and Blanchot's respective philosophical accounts of death[154].

Heidegger does not primarily concern himself with the factical certainty (which can be experienced neither objectively nor directly) and factual (that is, empirical and phenomenological) death of Dasein, but rather with its factual uncertainty (death's Vorkommen in others) and one's relation with death and the existential implications of this fundamental fact. In his existential-analytical of death, Heidegger refuses to recognize death as the telos (its goal or point of perfection, culmination) or terminus (its sheer cessation) to life, or even the other of it. Rather, he posits death as something immanent which imbues life: "Death is a phenomenon of life… Death is a way to be" (*BT* 289-90). He founds the life of the Dasein on the notion of "being-towards-death" (Sein-

[152] See *Being and Time* 250-161. Henceforth abbreviated to *BT*.

[153] In this regard a prefatory remark is in order. The juxtaposition of the three thinkers (Levinas, Derrida and Blanchot) is not done out of ignorance of different horizons of thinking from which their ideas emerge; nor carried out out of ignorance of the essential differences between them. It is carried out primarily due to the similarities between them regarding the experience of death and death-boundedness, the finitude of the subject, the moment of death and their ethical and existential implications.

[154] In this regard, I will take issue with Zimmerman's assertion that death in Barker's works is invariably "histrionic" (227). I will also argue that despite the affinities between Barker's conception of death with that of Bataille (concerning desire, excess, eroticism, and the convergence of Eros and Thanatos), there are noteworthy differences between the two.

zum-Tode)[155] and discerns it as the inerasable and essential characteristic of Dasein. Heidegger in an intensely condensed and laconic statement articulates the fundamental/defining features of (the experience of) death:

> Death is a possibility-of-Being which Dasein itself has to take over in every case. With death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. This is a possibility in which the issue is nothing less than Dasein's Being-in-the-world...When Dasein stands before itself as such a possibility, it has been *fully* assigned to its ownmost potentiality for Being. When it stands before itself in this way, all its relations to any other Dasein have been undone. This ownmost, non relational, possibility is at the same time the uttermost one. As potentiality-for-Being, Dasein cannot outstrip the possibility of death. Death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein. Thus, death reveals itself as *that possibility which is one's ownmost, which is non-relational, and which is not to be outstripped.* (*BT* 294)[156].

This passage needs to be concisely unraveled in order for us to elicit the points of convergence as well as those of divergence between Heidegger and Barker. First, Heidegger characterizes the experience of death as absolutely personal and private – not to be undertaken vicariously; strictly speaking, "no one can take the Other's dying away from him" (*BT* 284). The singular and proper relation that Dasein might establish with itself and its death as with he who must die his own death (which reduces the individual to his bare individuality) is invariably individualizing, and from which the possibility of a singular, authentic self unfolds. Second, death is unrelated or non-relational. In the experience of death all bonds and attachments to others are severed and dissolved and one is left bare (divested of all relieving relations) and exposed to an abyss; the value and logic of exchange do not apply here. Third, death is unsurpassable, that is, it cannot be outstripped or circumvented. As such, it represents the uttermost and extreme possibility of Dasein's life. And Eventually the last characteristic of Dasein's death is its most controversial one and has far-reaching implications for our discussion here: death as the possibility of the

[155] Death is a mode of being "Let Sterben be the term for the mode of being [Seinsweise] in which Dasein is towards its death [...] Dasein does not first die, or does not really die at all, with and in the experience of factical demise" (*BT* 247).
[156] *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962).

absolute impossibility of Dasein. Death is a factical certainty, an ontological reality, and yet, simultaneously, a factual uncertainty, an ontic unreality inasmuch as the direct, immediate and objective experience of death (as a factual event) is impossible.[157] Nevertheless, death as such constitutes the horizon for the life.

Accordingly, Heidegger distinguishes between three modes of being for Dasein: authentic, inauthentic, and indifferent (*BT* 69-79). Regardless of the mode of indifference which does not concern us here (and can be provisional and transitory or more continuous), the relation between authentic and inauthentic has proved contentious and gnarly. Nevertheless, one must be wary not to presume their mode of relation to be binary oppositions or antitheses (see Havi Carel, 66-70); what is at issue here is a matter of priority not transcendence, elimination or exclusion. Although Heidegger prioritizes and lends credence to the authentic mode over and above inauthentic mode, he does not repudiate one at the cost of the other; they are indeed interrelated and concomitant. Moran's remark testifies to the point at issue: "the inauthentic is the very condition of authenticity" (239).

The criteria for demarcating authenticity and inauthenticity is not confined to death, but reside in one's approach to Being and one's being-in-the-world, to language, and to time or temporality. Inauthentic Dasein's primary reaction to death is rejection or negation; as Rilke asserts: "Man cannot read the word death without negation" (in *Poetry, Language, Thought, 125*). Or a more subtle manner/approach is paying lip service to the actuality/factuality of death only to evade and procrastinate it more furtively and profoundly. He might acknowledge that he might die some time but not here and now and his seemingly justifiable alibi/pretext draws/relies on an ancient and conventional wisdom: "mors certa, hora incerta" (Choron 236). As such, the person acknowledges the sheer fact of its existence, but in a way which forecloses on its full bearing on his/her life; he resorts to the confines of 'average everydayness', and thus loses himself in the illusions of the communal and self-deceptions of the collective They-self (das Man).

Heidegger maintains that people symptomatically deploy diverse mental and linguistic ruses to evade death and resort to different palliatives, such as what Barker calls "the tranquilizing

[157] As Heidegger writes: "The more unveiledly this possibility gets understood, the more purely does the understanding penetrate into it *as the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all*. Death, as possibility, gives Dasein nothing to be 'actualized', nothing which Dasein, as actual, could itself *be*" (*BT* 307).

mythologies" and "collective disciplines" of the social order (*DOAT* 48, 101), to eschew confronting the experience and the thought of death personally and solitarily. Barker gives voice to this stance thus: "The *fact* of death is self-evident, but not its *content* ... and even this *fact* of death relates primarily to *others*" (35). This consciousness of death arises and is kindled by anxiety. Heidegger attributes a crucial role to anxiety, and perceives it as a world-revealing mood (stimmung) which manifests Dasein's being-towardsness and being-free-for (232). He maintains that the resurgence of anxiety in Dasein prompts the proper attunement for the abyssal or traumatizing experience of one's thrownness and "being-in-the-world", which, in turn, paves the way for attaining authenticity[158]. Once death is affirmatively accepted, one begins to dwell the world and to anticipate death with equanimity (glassenheit).

In this regard, Heidegger discriminates between, the death which befalls the individual (collective death, massacre, accidental death), and the death which is affirmed and embraced by the individual consciously. He stresses that only the latter is conducive to authenticity for Dasein. Such a position (attitude) yields one conspicuous corollary among others: one must heed that what matters is not each linear consecutive moment of one's life but one's life as a whole, the summation of moments as a totality; and this disposition, according to other philosophers and most prominently Levinas, is one of the failures or drawbacks of Heidegger's philosophical system, meaning that, he tends to enclose and encompass life within the circle of possibilities, and thus constitutes what Critchley calls "a thanatological circle" (*Very Little* 79). And this is this quasi-Hegelian aspect which is trenchantly criticized by Blanchot, Levinas, and Derrida; moreover, as I will seek to demonstrate, it constitutes one of Barker's points of departure from a Heideggerian stance.

[158] As Heidegger explicitly states: "The indefiniteness of death is primordially disclosed in anxiety. […] It moves out of the way everything which conceals the fact that Dasein has been abandoned to itself. The 'nothing' [Nichts] with which anxiety brings us face to face, unveils the nullity [Nichtigkeit] by which Dasein, in its very basis, is defined…" (308) Elsewhere he more directly addresses the individualizing impact of anxiety: "In anxiety what is environmentally ready-to-hand sinks away, and so, in general, do entities within-the-world. The 'world' can offer nothing more, and neither can the Dasein-with of Others. ... Anxiety individualizes Dasein and thus discloses it as *'solus ipse'*. But this existential 'solipsism' is so far from the displacement of putting an isolated subject-thing into the innocuous emptiness of a worldless occurring, that in an extreme sense what it does is precisely to bring Dasein face to face with its world as world, and thus bring it face to face with itself as being-in-the-world" (233).

Derrida and Aporia [159]

Derrida's deconstructive engagement with Heidegger's ontological phenomenology of Dasein's death in *Aporias* comprises two principal parts, though both are intimately linked and concerned with the question of border (or limit) in conjunction with the phenomenological principle of "as such". First is Derrida's tackling of triadic conceptual delimitation and the definition of authentic or proper dying of Dasein. The second consists of Derrida's intervention in the debate between Heidegger and Aries regarding the transcendental-metaphysical primacy of respective disciplines in their approach to death.

In *Aporias*, Derrida's critique is mainly directed towards Heidegger's existential-ontological approach to death (among whose ideas on death are death as a phenomenological limit, death as the possibility of the impossibility) and focuses on and problematizes the idea of a "limit-line," "threshold," or border segregating life and death, and self and the other, human and animal, which, as he argues, is an aporia implicit in Heidegger's existential analytic. For Derrida, given that in Heidegger's elaboration, Dasein embodies its possibilities existentially, and death is "the possibility of an impossibility," embodying the possibility of an impossibility would seem to entail embodying an impossibility. Derrida, however, teases out the subtle paradoxes inherent in Heidegger thus: "If death, the most proper possibility of Dasein, is the possibility of its impossibility, death becomes the most improper possibility and the most ex-propriating, the most in authenticating one" (77). Death has no border in the further sense that it is a word (like 'God') that will if this possibility should in fact obtain, if death turns out to entail the cessation of experience, and I cannot experience the cessation of experience, then, strictly speaking, my death does not happen to me. Derrida articulates this point provocatively: "here dying would be the aporia, the impossibility of being dead, the impossibility of living or rather 'existing' one's death" (73). Simply put, we cannot eradicate the possibility that we cannot experience death. Finally, Derrida demonstrates how Heidegger's articulation of death as the possibility of the impossibility, is, in the final analysis, aporetic and the conceptual demarcations he sketches out cannot be sustained.

[159] Levinas on the Epicurean maxim that "where death is I am not, and where I am death is not: "It misunderstands the entire paradox of death. For it effaces the relation with death, which is a unique relationship with the future. But at least the adage insists on the eternal futurity of death. The fact that it deserts every present is not due to our evasion of death and to an unpardonable diversion at the supreme hour but to the fact that death is ungraspable" (*Time and the Other* 71).

Derrida through a meticulous scrutiny of the three distinct concepts (three figures of dying or modalities of ending) in Heidegger's ontological architectonic in *Being and Time* and his elaboration of Dasein's being-towards-death - verenden (to perish, to end, to die biologically, often used for animals and species lower than human), ableben (to demise or decease, with medical-legal connotations and mainly used to denote empirical death of a human being), and sterben (to die properly and authentically by Dasein) - exposes the contradictions inhering Heidegger's discrete concepts. Derrida through a rigorous discussion establishes how Heidegger's according primacy, significance and possibility of authenticity to "sterben eigentlich" is based on his problematic assumptions and demarcations concerning human and animal coupled with the concepts of language and temporality (*Aporias* 39-40)[160]. Derrida, by laying bare the intricate ways in which Heidegger's distinction is riddled with paradoxes (if pushed and pursued to their logical end), undertakes to demonstrate that the boundaries between the three are much more tentative, blurred, and untenable than Heidegger is disposed to concede and acknowledge, and that they are in fact chiasmatically imbricated.[161]

It is Heidegger's contention that an anthropology of death invariably presupposes, and is premised on, the existential analytic of death. Heidegger, rather than dismissing the former, subordinates anthropological (as an ontic subcategory) to his own fundamental-ontological, a move which Derrida partially approves (see *Aporias* 25-8). Subjecting the underpinnings of both Aries' anthropo-thanatological and Heidegger's ontological approaches to the provocative

[160] Derrida also questions the basis on which Heidegger excludes the animal from this 'proper' death, or from the experience of death *as* death. Heidegger postulates an essential relation between language and the experience (or consciousness of) mortality/death: "Mortals are they who can experience death as death. Animals cannot do so. But animals cannot speak either. The essential relation between death and language flashes up before us, but remains still unthought" (*On the Way to Language*. Trans. Peter Hertz. New York: Harper Collins, 1979, 107). As Derrida observes, Heidegger also distinguishes animals from human (and Dasein) based on their inability to speak: the animal is, for Heidegger, without language. Indeed, it is language that would seem to permit the identification of death properly speaking, or death *as such*. And yet, since no-one can ever properly testify to or credit death *as such* (for, impossibly, one would have to be dead to do so), Here is Derrida's critical response: "Who will guarantee that the name, the ability to name death (like that of naming the other, and it is the same) does not participate as much in the dissimulation of the 'as such' of death as in its revelation, and that language is not precisely the origin of the nontruth of death, and of the other? (76)

[161] As Derrida emphasizes: "If 'the distinction between death [der Tod] or properly dying [eigentlich sterben]' and 'perishing' [verenden] were compromised, weakened, or parasited on both sides of what it is supposed to dissociate . . . then (and you can guess that I am heading toward such a possibility) the entire project of the analysis of Dasein, in its essential conceptuality, would be, if not discredited, granted another status than the one generally attributed to it" (31–32).

logic/figure of aporia, Derrida, nonetheless, accords primacy to neither of them. The aporia impinges without restraint upon the existential analysis of death that Heidegger seeks to grant fundamental anteriority over and above both the metaphysical construal of death and its anthropological treatment. Derrida discusses how death (and the experience thereof) is inextricably intertwined, and conditioned, with historicity, cultural-national-social specificities and language. The solution that Derrida advances is to demonstrate how both approaches are mutually constitutive, implicated in, and conditioned by one another, featuring simultaneously condition of possibility and impossibility of one another.

As indicated above, according to Heidegger, death *as such* is death in its irreplaceable singularity, its non-substitutable mineness", which establishes what is "proper" to *Dasein*. In this regard, Derrida does concur with Heidegger concerning the irrevocable relation between the individual and death, confirming that the presence of death affirms the individual experience of singularity and irreplaceability: "One has to give it [death] to oneself by taking it upon oneself, for it can only be mine alone, irreplaceably" (*Gift of Death* 45). Derrida, however, referring to both Blanchot's and Levinas's misgivings about the 'mineness' of death in Heidegger, considers one's relation to the other's death as essential and integral to one's own death (*Aporias* 66, 77-9). The thrust of Derrida's counter-argument to Heidegger's can be concisely captured in his two concepts of "originary mourning" and "originary temporalization" or "originary finitude".[162] The former designates the self and the other in their originary finitude, hetero-affectivity, and anxious anticipation of (one another's) death; it also intends to demonstrate how ego/selfhood develops and is constituted through the experience of the other as mortal (via an infinite series of introjection/incorporation and projections) – reminiscent of Freud's definition of the ego based on its losses or what it is not; in brief, as soon as I am born I am always already mourning for myself as well as the other. The latter, to put it very succinctly, means that the ecstatic (auto-affective)

[162] Attending to figure of Marrano, proposed by Derrida, illustrates the whole problematic of border and elucidates the multivalent and aporetic relation between borders of self and the other (identity and alterity), memory and forgetting, consciousness and the unconscious: Let us figuratively call Marrano anyone who remains faithful to a secret that he has not chosen, in the very place where he lives, in the home of the inhabitant or of the occupant, in the home of the first or of the second *arrivant*, in the very place where he stays without saying no but without identifying himself as belonging to. In the unchallenged night where the radical absence of any historical witness keeps him or her, in the dominant culture that by definition has calendars, this secret keeps the Marrano even before the Marrano keeps it. Is it not possible to think that such a secret eludes history, age, and aging? (*Aporias* 81)

temporality of Dasein (posited by Heidegger) as anticipatory resoluteness and a project of possibility is always already preceded by a radical passivity in the past (and the future).[163]

If we are to summarize three chief philosophical stances at stake here very succinctly, we can propound the following points. If for Heidegger one's death is the first death is the death of oneself, of mine; and if for Levinas it is the death of the other (person) which is the first death. For Derrida, death (which is neither first nor last) belongs first and foremost neither to oneself nor to the other; death, however, is of the edge and comes from the limit, threshold, or border of either beyond oneself or the border between self and the other[164]. Indeed the epigraph to his *Aporias* - "DYING - awaiting [oneself or one another] at the 'limits of truth'" ("MOURIR - s'attendre aux 'limites de la verite'") (n.p.; translation modified) - coalesced with all the semantic variations it evokes, pithily substantiate this point: awaiting oneself at death; awaiting death at/as the end of oneself and expecting it to come; and, finally, awaiting one another at death.[165] Derrida articulates the anachronism or contretemps at stake in the aforesaid points provocatively: "death is ultimately the name of impossible simultaneity and of an impossibility that we know simultaneously, at which we await each other, at the same time, ama as one says in Greek: at the same time, simultaneously, we are expecting this anachronism and this contretemps" (65).

[163] Derrida maintains that the experience of mourning "institutes my relation to myself and constitutes the egoity of the ego as well as every Jemeinigkeit in the differance-neither internal nor external-that structures this experience. The death of the other, this death of the other in 'me,' is fundamentally the only death that is named in the syntagm "my death," with all the consequences that one can draw from this" (76; see also *Archive Fever* 78).

[164] For a more extensive discussion of the differences between Derrida, Heidegger, and Levinas in this regard, see Boothroyd in "Of ghostwriting and possession: translating 'my father', or s'expliquer avec la mort" " in *The Limits of Death,* 198-219. Boothroyd's inspiring recapitulation of Derrida's attitude in this regard merits quoting: "Death is encountered in the coming back from the edge as an ego-less alterity – the only 'true' form of which, as Derrida has given us to think over so many years and in so many texts, is *Writing* (écriture)" (212). In this regard, see also John Llewelyn's *Appositions of Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas*, 105-129.

[165] Derrida expands on the semantic and philosophical implications of his epigraph (as an idiosyncratic and revisionary rendition of Heidegger's formula) thus: "In order to wait for the other at this meeting place, one must' on the contrary arrive there late, not early. Taking into consideration the anachronism of the waiting for each other in this contretemps of mourning would certainly change the commonly and hastily assumed premises of the triangular debate that we assigned to Freud, Heidegger, and Levinas: with respect to death, the death of oneself,, and the death of the other. The s'attendre that I have used in order to translate Heidegger's sentence involves imminence, indeed, the anxious anticipation of something, but also the double or rather triple transitivity (non-reflexive and reflexive) of the expecting, the waiting for something that will happen as the completely other than oneself, but of waiting (for each other) by awaiting oneself also, by preceding oneself as if one had a meeting with a oneself that one is but does not know" (65-6).
For an extended philosophical elaboration on this point, see Paola Maraati's *Genesis and Trace*, 142-176.

Notwithstanding the noteworthy affinities between Barker and Heidegger in relation to death, a cursory glance across Barker's middle and later plays in conjunction with his *Death, the One* (which constitutes his most sustained reflection on death) reveals the extent to which death is principally intertwined with moments of encounter with a cadaver, eventful/ecstatic love, erotic love, and intimacy between the self and the Other (also called the One) whose loss, death, or absence induces a traumatic existential-ontological loss (void) in the self and brings about an experience of abjection, thereby throwing into crisis and disarray one's identity, affectivity, and sensibility to the point of altering its existence (approximating an undergoing of death by the self). Equally important is the way Barker articulates self's relationship to death in terms of "how to enter death" is posed as the focal point: "How should we enter death? Is this not the subject of all philosophy and all theatre, despite the protestations of all philosophy and all theatre that they are instruments for *living*?" (18)

Further, dissimilar to Heidegger (who as pointed out earlier does not concern himself with the factical aspect of death), Barker does not confine his reflection on death to the self's factual "relation" to death, but is equally fascinated with death as facticity, and as manifesting itself obliquely through corpses, the moribund, the fatally diseased, eroticism, and "space/places" associated with death (such as ruins, morgue and hospitals) (see *DOAT* 2, 23-4, 27, 39). Such an obsession with death and the dead also brings about ramifications that are not present in Heidegger and are unique to Barker: including intimacy and proximity with the dead. The dead in many of Barker's plays exert an unremitting, reverberating and profound influence on the living.

Eliciting our inkling from two speculative observations by Barker in *Death, the One* - one on the "altered conditions of the dead" and alteration as "the *hope of death*" (87)[166]; and the other, to the effect that the language of death is a "language learned only by the dying" (46) - Burgteata's instinctive and impulsive (erotic and intellectual) attraction, and proximity, to the dying, in *Found in the Ground*, can be construed as a punctilious meditation on the possibility of "altered conditions" and "visions" of the dying and her exploration of the elusive boundaries, and correlation, between the composition of a death-ly language and consciousness and the de-composition of a worldly language and consciousness on the other. Burgteata, referring to the

[166] Here is the complete passage: "The presumption of the living in speaking of the dead ('*He would have liked . . .*'). Has death not altered him? Is not alteration the *hope of death*?" (87).

dying, says: “No / All right / No / Oh / No / (The WORKMAN is still.) / No / They see / They hear the dying / How acute their hearing is / Every rustle of my clothes” (FG 191). The reflection on the moribund state of conscious (near-death experience) evoked in *Found in the Ground* partly recalls the condition of selfhood and consciousness reached by the dwellers of *Arcadia*, particularly near the end of the play and through the song contest (when they are deprived of both love and death (which, from another perspective, is reminiscent of Agamben’s bare life... where the subject is stripped of all the properties that uphold the identity). Burgteata continues her ruminations thus:

> “On the other hand / (Pause.) (She grapples with an idea.) / Can the dying be affronted by what affronts the living? / They / Surely they / (Pause. She looks at the WORKMAN.) / Are entering a new realm of consciousness? / Unlittered / Unburdened / Un / Everythinged? / (Pause.) / And watch some act of / Hear some act of / Whatever act we even now are contemplating / WITH SUPREME INDIFFERENCE? / Yes / Yes […] (She is bemused) / But if they cannot suffer it / If they have travelled beyond suffering our wickedness / (She stands upright. Her skirt falls.) / What's our pleasure in the wicked? (191)

A highly evocative instance of the moribund language reached by a tragic poet (from whom we do not hear any poems throughout the play but these last lines, although acclaimed as the greatest living poet in the realm). The ultimate words uttered by Tot whilst in the throes of death transpires as a poetics of a liminal subjectivity/consciousness, a refraction of rhapsodically commingled memories and affects, a language that is not described or reflected on, but performatively figured:

> Immense/ piano/ dust/ in sun/ falling/ dust falling/ biscuit/ cracked/ the lino/ scrubbed boots/ hand/ old hand/ so old/ the hand/ dropped it/ the domino/ floor/ cat/ dirt/ wound/ scab/ five/ immensely old/ dip it/ dip the biscuit/ dip the biscuit in the tea/ five dots/ five/ apron/ flowers/ stable/ Joe/ bites never/ five dots/ the domino/ kicks never/ Joe/ nice loaf/ crust/ mother /apron / red light / red light / piano / did she / girl / mother / piano / apron / apron (Tot is dead) (*Blok/Eko* 115-6).

In addition to Barker's attention to the relational[167] dimension of death, death is also described to pertain to the order of mystery: "The greatest mystery of the universe is death. Unlike other mysteries, the mystery of death is characterized by terror. Only tragedy makes death its exclusive concern. It therefore enters willingly into terror, without presuming to disarm it" (48). Indeed, in Barker, death is depicted as an aporetic space of non-savoir, where the implacable operations of various faculties, including reason/rationality, language, and imagination, cease; where the unquenchable urge to enlightenment, knowledge, utilitarianism and meaning are superseded by an absolute, anxious exposure to the other/event. Death, in Barker's treatment, counter and precludes the possibility of epistemological forays into it by medicine and mythology: "Admire death for its disdain of these tranquillizing mythologies. Its obscurity is *impenetrable*... (48); he also adds: "How death makes idiots of us ... in this it is the supreme *discipline* ... (43). In Barker's understanding of death, view, death not only eludes not only the cognitive-conceptual grasp of knowledge, but is clad in (vested...) in a fourfold negativity. First, death remains defiant of imagination: "Death is the limit not only of life but also of imagination and therefore the stop of poetry" (30); second, death is not amenable to "representation" (53); third, death cannot be rendered more comprehensible or familiar through metaphor[168]; and fourth, death cannot be "personified" (71), nor can cadaver or corpse be taken to incarnate or concretize death: Death communicates nothing. To describe it as mute is to speak only part of its mystery. It is not to be found on the surface of the cadaver" (34); then adding: "Death is not in the remains" (34). As such, death can be construed to be essentially non-essential; death appears simultaneously to be condition of possibility and condition of impossibility of experience and artistic creation.

At various point Barker describes death in terms of mystery, secret, seduction, and silence. As Barker asserts: "Death is the secret of secrets, the origin of the idea of the secret, of which

[167] By relation, here, I strictly intend the evental-proximal relationship between self and the singular Other, between self and the lover, and only finally (and at times never, in Barker of course) with the collective or communal at all.
[168] Barker, keenly cognizant of the epistemological aim underlying the use of metaphor as a figure of though deployed for bringing something incognito or far-fetched closer to perception, sensation or cognition, argues for its futility with respect to death: "The unknown is evoked by reference to the known, a legitimate practice of the metaphorist, but in this instance alone, a *failed equation*..." (30). As Barker contends: "No metaphor for what is sublime in silence. If silence were a wall, one would seek a ladder for it. Rejoice in *one* absolute" (73). Elsewhere he wields metaphor specifically in relation to tragedy (as a genre) "A confession – even the tragedians have not yet adequately served their theme. In meditating on death they have been satisfied with metaphors of numbing poverty..." (104)

desire is the highest manifestation *in life* ...” (55). In fact, Barker maintains not only that authenticity of tragedy’s approach to death lies in its naked exposure to the death’s absolute alterity, secrecy and mysteriousness approach, but also Barker’s idea of authentic tragedy as one which partakes in/of the attributes of death. Crucially, and testifying to the aporetic attitude informing Barker’s approach, death is neither equated with (a passage to) nothingness nor with (a passage to) another life while neither is repudiated but both possibilities are held in a suspended tension and in a disjunctive relation: “If death were simply nothing we would fear it less and contemplate it less. The anxiety surrounding death arises from the possibility it is *not nothing*. This anxiety is fuelled by the rumour of its being *something*” (45). The sheer unknowability is borne out in the fact that Barker persistently apprises us of our being inured to thinking of death in terms of life and demands us to strive *to think of life in terms of death* cogently bears witness to this feature (89).Therefore, the conclusion which can be drawn from the above discussion is that death, as conceived by Barker proves not only as an irreducible, uncontainable “negativity among other idiosyncrasies, is irresolvably ambiguous to the point of being aporetic.” The following excerpt more explicitly substantiates this point: on the one hand, “To become dead is to cease the elaboration of values, the prioritization of values, the valuing of values” (21); on the other hand, he does not hesitate to emphasize that death might have “surplus value” (62). In this respect he considerably approaches and is evocative (consonant with) starts to share substantial similarities with Blanchot, Levinas and Derrida; and particularly the former two for whom death belongs to the same order.

Levinas’s ideas are helpful in this regard. Levinas in a scathing critique of Heidegger contends how Heidegger dissipates the radical alterity of death, makes death “an event of freedom”, affirmation of which yields wholeness of one’s life, meaning, whose corollary is that the nothingness or mystery of death is converted into ground for the accomplishment of one’s projects.[169] Levinas, in his description of death, inverts Heidegger’s definition, and articulates subject's relationship with death as impossibility (of possibility); more specifically, he renders this relationship in terms of relationship with the infinite and with the evil genius: “Death threatens me

[169] As Levinas argues: “In Dasein, inasmuch as it is, something is always lacking: precisely that which it can be and become. To this lack belongs the end itself; but the end of being-in-the-world is death. It is a matter of unfolding for once the question of Dasein’s being-able-to-be-a-whole, which the end of being-in-the-world is death. It is by way of a certain relationship to death that Dasein will be a whole” (*God, Death, and Time*. Trans. Bettina Bergo. Stanford University Press, 2000, 35).

from beyond. This unknown that frightens, the silence of the infinite spaces that terrify, comes from the other, and this alterity precisely as absolute, strikes me in an evil design or in a judgment of justice" (*TI* 234). Being-in-the-world, as Levinas depicts it, does not on its own foster Glassenheit (equanimity and release) and Lichtung (lighting), but, contrariwise, turns out to be a suffocating immersion in existence and the realization of the indifference of Being: "[B]eing is evil not because it is finite but without limits" (*Time and the Other* 29). The salient point of divergence between Levinas and Heidegger resides in the former's postulation of the death of the other as the first and the latter's attributing of the first death to the self[170].

Moreover, Levinas unlike Heidegger phenomenologically dense and rich lived postponement, suffering, futurity and passivity (see *TO* 70-8; see also *TI* 232-236). Death as the impossibility of dying-the primordial form of the equivocality of the lived body and the physical body (*TI* 235-8), of the ambiguous event of "dwelling" - is undergone as physical suffering, through which the interval of the not yet (or dead time) is lived. Analogous to Barker who at numerous points in *Death, the One* and throughout his dramatic work engages with the relation between murder, death and violence (and the necessary relation between them), and departing from Heidegger who ignores/neglects this point, murder "is at the origin of death (*TI* 236); he goes on to add, it is "as though murder, rather than being one of the occasions of dying, were inseparable from the essence of death" (*TI* 234). Levinas also death with secret, mystery and (intimidating and distressing) silence refers to this "silence" in the context of the il y a thus: "Nothing responds to us, but this silence; the voice of this silence is understood and frightens like the silence of those infinite spaces Pascal speak, of" (*EE* 58). The peculiar temporality (the way one sees the inexorable approach of death, the not yet of death) and, death as the impossibility of dying have been vividly delineated in the ensuing passage:

> Death is a menace that approaches me as a mystery; its secrecy determines it - it approaches without being able to be assumed, such that the time that separates me from my death dwindles and dwindles without end, involves a sort of last interval which my

[170] Levinas' explicit remark confirms this point: "The death signified by the end could not measure the entire significance of death without becoming responsibility for another- by which one becomes oneself in reality: one becomes oneself through this untransferable, undelegatable responsibility. It is for the death of the other that I am responsible to the point of including myself in his death… I am responsible for the other in that he is mortal. The death of the other: therein lies the first death" (*God, Death, and Time*. Trans. Bettina Bergo. Stanford University Press, 200, 43).

> consciousness cannot traverse, and where a leap will somehow be produced from death to me. The last part of the route will be crossed without me; the time of death flows upstream; the I in its projection toward the future is overturned by a movement of imminence, pure menace, which comes to me from an absolute alterity. (*TI* 235)

In light of the foregoing evidence, death can be argued to transpires as the "metaphysical" principle of Barker's as applied to (described to the Art of Theatre of Catastrophe) designates in two senses Barker significantly describes his aphoristic reflections and speculations in *Death, the One* as "metaphysical" (*Style* 102), though he does not elaborate on what he means by the term. "Metaphysical" as I have deployed it here concerning the role assigned to death in Barker, and as applied to the Art of Theatre designates in two senses. It is my argument that metaphysical can be interpreted along two lines; first, metaphysical as "transcendental" ... death as the ultimate ground of Tragic Art of Theatre and yet in its own right groundless and essentially ambiguous and opaque (in a Kantian sense yet substantially qualified to be and proves to be "aporetic") since "death" as broached, elaborated and features and depicted and treated by Barker (given, considering) transpires as both the condition of possibility and condition of impossibility of not only his art of theatre, the tragic experience and the autonomy and existential authenticity of both the protagonist and the catastrophic theatre; but the underlying conditions of it.

Aporetic Death in Ego in Arcadia

Another prominent point to be considered in this regard is the distinct and idiosyncratic way death is treated in plays such as *Rome* and *Ego in Arcadia* where death is unequivocally aporetic – that is, almost entirely absent (and yet present) or impossible (and yet possible). The characters in these plays simply do not die, and if murdered or drawn towards suicide, they survive their death or continue to haunt the narrative spectrally. In them the world, the self, the relationship to the Other seem to stretch infinitely and indefinitely in a world where death seems to come from, or approach the world, from the edge. Accordingly the characters, driven by an inexorable and compulsive urge, lurch towards the limits of the self and the world, towards an abyssal sea (of selfhoods and of ontological im-possibilities). To compound the issue at stake even further, there are equally provocative examples epitomized in *Gertrude-The Cry*, in which death though desired

and "conceded, or acquiesced, to" by the character (in this case: Claudius) seems to be indirectly endowed by (or come through) the Other (in this case: Gertrude) or from the edge. In such cases, *the aporetic nature of death*, as conceived by Barker, is rendered more palpable.

The explication of the pivotal place death occupies in Barker's tragic ontology and aesthetics in conjunction with the inter-subjective or relational (ethical) significance he attaches to it render death, I would propose, simultaneously the transcendental a priori (philosophically) and the Real (to put it in psychoanalytical terms) of his drama. They also help us establish the prevailing conception of death in Barker against which we can appraise the extent to which *Ego in Arcadia* diverges from this trend and to determine its idiosyncrasies particularly in comparison to the dominant trend in Barker's oeuvre. The foremost point worth underscoring is that in *Ego in Arcadia* the whole foregoing (quasi-Heideggerian) dynamics has evidently been inverted. In fact, it can be argued that, here, Barker deploys, what theoretically can be characterized as, a non-Heideggerian treatment and depiction of death (death as the impossibility of possibility), apparently to establish and reach, what can provisionally and heuristically be called, both a Heideggerian and a non-Heideggerian, to wit, approaching a Levinasian and Blanchotian attitude. More lucidly, what prevails in *Ego in Arcadia* is the impossibility of the possibility of death rather than its possibility of impossibility. Nevertheless, the possibility of death is not entirely dismissed, and there is a flicker of a chance to attain death in the play. By the same token, I would argue that in *Arcadia*, Barker, akin to Heidegger on the one hand, and Levinas on the other, broaches the question of one's approach, and relation, to death (by the individual) in terms of authenticity, whilst the latter is intended in two respects: existential and ethical (relational/interpersonal). Barker chooses death as a criterion for determining the existential authenticity of the characters in the sense that whether death is encountered and treated personally (as one's own and one's nature) and affirmatively in such a way that it leads to individualizing (prompting an adherence to an aesthetics of (re-)individuation and of the relationship to the Other) and to attainment of self-knowledge. In other words, an authentic relation should instigate the affirmation of the contingency, mutability and re-fabrication of the self, though infused with pain, loss, and anxiety; and if life/self is in this light treated as contingent, malleable, it leads to undertaking an aesthetics of self-overcoming which enhances the individual's engagement with existence/being and the other and intensifies and expands their perceptual, imaginative, and linguistic capacities.

Upon closer inspection, Arcadia, as it can be deduced from the description and inklings given by the characters, is both permeated with and purged of death; hence, as regards the status of death, it exhibits an aporetic state. When Lili - petrified at the sight of Sansom's recovering his life after being killed by Mosca - exclaims: "(staring in horror at Sansom): He's not dead... [...] This man's not dead!", Poussin responds, "No one dies in Arcadia ... That is the horror of the place . . . (They look at him.) /You'll want to, obviously ... / Oh, how you'll want to..." (274). However, he does not linger to add that "Death is here. / Certainly, he's here, but so discriminating, you will hate him for his impeccable disdain ... (He smiles, drawing down his brush.)" (Ibid). Similarly, Le Vig perceives the experience of being in Arcadia as that of death which is not a factical, literal death though; he moans:

> I don't like it here ... / (Poussin merely looks into him).
>
> It's — / I'm being emotional again — its —
>
> Peculiarly — / Like being / Dead ... (288)

Sleen's assertion corroborates the point at issue even further while, in the meantime, hints at the metaphorical aspect of death as well: "I am certain death is here. It is a graveyard after all. A graveyard of convictions ... But where? Monsieur Poussin knows, it is the single source of his authority why **I do not share this fascination I can't think"** (291). Elsewhere, in keeping with the previous statements, Sleen explicitly adverts to the absence of death: "Pity... / Pity, this impossibility of death ... I never liked him either, but did I ever like myself? **All my hatreds were unjust,** they said so at the tribunal, my **hatreds were the product of a fevered mind"** (282). This impossibility (or incapacity) of death to be actualized is foregrounded (parodically) when Tocsin (who as defined by the character notes, is supposed to impersonate death) fails to be sufficiently "potent", "unsurpassable" and invincible"; more strictly, he fails to personify death properly or as conventionally defined, and is smothered by Poussin when trying to take his life. Hence the ambition or the aspiration of the artist in 'the first slope' for the total mastery of his work and the world of the work; or, more precisely, creation of the artwork as a symbol of overcoming finitude and death – through both artistic gestures: personification of death in art and overcoming death - is simultaneously upheld and undermined with respect to Poussin. I will explore the significance of this scene and probe its various facets at length in the concluding section.

Death appears to be arbitrarily, unreachable and unattainable in *Arcadia*. The characters inhabiting and roaming in Arcadia, have to seek death or even court it through a song contest and yet they are not granted death. This becomes apparent when Tocsin (the alleged dispenser of death) teasingly says: Tocsin: "Plead now, **plead!**" and the reaction of characters substantiates the point: "They all wail with piercing cries"; to which he responds thus: **"**Stop! / Stop! (Silence) **/** I call that love . . . it's ... (He shrugs.) / Dishonest but. . . I'm gratified ..." (307). One of the reasons that can be proposed for such a state can be attributed to the fact that, highly analogous to the dwellers of Blanchot's first slope[171], they still seek death inauthentically, meaning as an occurrence, as a meaningful and meaning-constituting / meaning-endowing event. As such they are trying to will death either as a means for the affirmation of self-sufficiency and sovereign subjective will or as a vector for oblivion, self-renunciation, and, even more significant, death with a definite and determinate meaning: oblivion, alleviation, release. Such a longing for oblivion and self-abdication is manifested in Tocsin's flaunting about his being an object of desire: "I'm loved...! (Pause) / And I — could not care less...! (Pause) / Now, that is typical. That is life all over. Don't you find? That is the human condition? (Pause) / I, the focus of desire — am supremely — what's the word — indifferent! Blasé! Anodyne!" (307). Death for most characters (including Mosca, Dover and Sleen) is a desire not to be: death as finality. At the song contest when they are supposed to compose the most impressive and compelling poetic-lyric self-expression in order to be bestowed death, Dover, despaired of Poussin's love, asserts: "**And every fucking thing** not one of which earned me your love so all my childish hours were fatuous and futile silly infant I believe these things were called **accomplishments** […] they might at least earn me a peace if death is peace I so dislike my life ... (She breathes.) May I go first, then?" (308) This desperate plea for retreat from not only human relations and world, but from "being" in general is poignantly evident in Sleen's decision to withdraw to a cave, entreating Poussin to Take me away, Monsieur Poussin. Show me a grotto or a hermitage. I like to be disposed of. You dispose... of me ... (DOVER kisses

[171] According to Blanchot, the aspiration of the person in the first slope is to achieve or experience death as a possibility as a potentiality, as a perfection, as a source of power; to utilize death as a constructive negativity or a destructive positivity; to personalize and domesticate death. As Blanchot articulates (having specifically or ... Kafka in mind):'death [as regards the first slope] is the greatest hope of human beings, their only hope of being human' (*Gaze of Orpheus* 55). He refers to three systems of thought, including "Hegel's, Nietzsche's, Heidegger's - however much they may oppose each other" as "attempts at making death possible" (SL 96).Such a tendency most evidently manifests itself in religious tenets and convictions, as well as in sadism, stoicism and unhappy consciousness (the suicide or the sadist): "As we know, a writer's main temptations are called stoicism, scepticism and unhappy consciousness" (GO 37).

SLEEN on the cheek. SLEEN is still.) What's that? Pity?" (322). And finally Tocsin's clinches the assumption concerning death and the intention underlying characters' participation in the song contest, while shedding light on the question of authenticity too, thus: "Not the word? He knows, he is the author of a dozen books — At least a dozen — he is culture itself — […] whereas I possess **I am not charming** the single thing **not very seductive in myself** you all aspire —to ... (Pause) / Oblivion. (Pause) / No wonder you love me ... only I can give relief...! No wonder you fawn and flatter me. I am the solitary doctor in the house of plague" (307).

The other revealing point is that, in accord with the impossibility/absence of death in *Ego in Arcadia*, it is not the anxiety over death (and its imminent/immanent possibility), but the "horror" over the absence of death (its impossibility of possibility) and the attendant irrevocableness and irremediableness of being/living that overwhelms the characters and the ambience of the play. Nevertheless, since horror cannot be aesthetically contemplated from outside, the stylistic, linguistic and ontological attributes that inform *Ego in Arcadia* coalesce to form an assemblage that imparts and releases dread within the reader/audience.

This salient mood in conjunction with the ontological-existential circumstances infusing *Arcadia* are immediately evocative of, and highly consonant with, Levinas's provocative and vigorous alternative stance to the question of death, being, and existence articulated in *On Escape* and *Existence and Existents* (in which he pits his idea of il y a against Heidegger's es gibt and accords primacy to ethics over and above ontology). In the state of il y a: "there is horror of being and not anxiety over nothingness, fear of being and not fear for being" (*EE* 62). As such, horror, as the focal mood of il y a, "carries out the condemnation to perpetual reality, to existence with 'no exit'" (*EE* 62). Il y a is further described in terms of spectrality, murder, and uncanny recurrence: "horror is the event of being that returns in the heart of this negation [murder] as though nothing had happened" (*EE* 62). Impugning Heidegger's prioritization of anxiety concerning death, Levinas asks, "Is not anxiety over Being—horror of Being - just as primal as anxiety over death?" (*EE* 20) Accordingly, in keen contrast to the experience of anxiety and consequent fear for being in confrontation with one's mortality and death (conducive to authenticity), in the state of il y a[172] (akin to Blanchotian the other night or the second slope) instigates fear of being and is

[172] Il y a is Levinas's term for Being as an anonymous and indifferent Discerning an unobtrusive yet firm complicity between ontology and Being one the one hand and the totalitarian politics on the other, Levinas valorizes and

replete with horror or dread of being irremediably chained to being and one's self without the prospect of exit or escape or possibility of transcendence or self-overcoming:"the rustling of the il y a is horror … horror is somehow a movement which will strip consciousness of its very subjectivity" (*EE* 60).

The other significant point is the existential mood of the characters in Arcadia. They are already laden with a world-weariness and a jaded desire for relating to others. The characters, as soon as they set foot in Arcadia, are either already haunted by a disposition to self-abnegation and craving for death or are gradually led to that stage. It is not far-fetched to assume that one of the reasons they have been driven to Arcadia is their nearly common existential- ontological exhaustion and their psychological state (to wit, their inclination to self-hatred and self-loathing or to self-absorption). Dover's itinerary is exemplary in this regard. Initially she says: **"Yes I am** the **cruel . . .** which is to say ... I love life ... I hold it by the throat ..." (Dover, in Arcadia); her later remark illustrates the cataclysm: "How impossible to look in mirrors how without self-hatred" (309). Mosca, who insisted on his dignity, agility and status, now forgoes all the props: "I detest life I detest all life" (); and later: "**You are the cause of such degeneracy I hate myself...**" (305). Le Vig who is indubitably the most narcissistic character in the play (only Poussin can match him at certain occasions) reaches a point of self-fragmentation and self-loathing, saying: "Infectious and corrosive at the same time, though now it / I — I seems so long ago — I hardly recognize the person I was then — Le Vig laments or bemoans: "I hate myself ... I hate myself..." (306). Though, dwelling on the underlying causes of such a spiritual-psychological state are beyond the scope of the present section, yet as I will demonstrate extensively in the ensuing section, the chief causes can be detected to reside in three distinct yet interrelated issues: melancholia, narcissism and unrequited love.

The other evidence to the aporetic (and Il y atic) state of death in *Arcadia* manifests itself when Mosca is devastated by Dover's decline of his love and utters his wish to commit suicide, Poussin, addressing Mosca, says: "If it's any comfort to you… she will also want to die... she also will crave some smothering oblivion ... no luck however... this is the land of uncommitted suicides and murders which bring no relief" (285). So does Arcadia transpire throughout the play: a land

postulates ethics (defined as the self's (face-to-face relationship with the other as a singular human being who is infinitely and irreducibly Other, and transcendent to self's compass of cognition and comprehension)

of unattainable death and unsuccessfully committed suicides (amounting to uncommitted suicides). In this respect, it recalls Blanchot's idea of the second slope[173] (or the night of the insomnia) where the individual faces a fate worse than death, the irremissibility from existence and interminable experience of death (heroic death, the person who commits Suicide and his attempt at the creation of meaning). On the other hand, it is reminiscent of Le Vig's song that at the very moment of exposing himself and participating in a contest in which he is beseeching to be endowed with the gift of death, he is still plucking on the strings of the self, though ostensibly through an act of self-denial (see the concluding section on aporias of love below). Denied love (by Dover) despite his implacable strivings, Mosca eventually succumbs to madness and suicide:

> I was a suicide. Quite right. How excellent it is. Draw down the curtain. The very mark of sensibility. And **now I am a madman** talk them out of it why, the suicides are perfect in their judgement **jump, sir, slash, sir, kick the chair** away it's a tiny horror in comparison with what awaits the **undone act.** (Pause) As long as I was loved I was civil cynical but civil not burdened with the ideal but mildly tolerant and capable of kindness on and off — (He leans to DOVER.) (305)

Nevertheless, given the abolition of death from Arcadia, suicide purveys no redemption or deliverance from the anguish of thwarted love and the burden of the self. This futility of suicide is borne out once more in the conversation between Sansom and Sleen:

> SANSOM: If I don't make love with her I'll kill myself...
>
> SLEEN: Easier said than done round here... (295)

In this regard, Blanchot's reflection on the psychological subtleties embedded in suicide can shed light on the characters' incentives and respective conception of death. Blanchot poses suicide as the test case to the problematic of death. In his account of suicide, it no longer features as a conclusive terminus to a well-rounded life. It is no longer to be, illusorily, construed as an eventual affirmation of the will or as a decisive resolution to the plights and privations of life and the self.

[173] In the second slope, analogous to the aporetic conception of death, death features as the impossibility of possibility. Endeavors to gain access to an exteriority, which is both exterior and interior to the individual, are rendered ineffectual. The two impossible intentions or acts in this slope are to reach the language prior to the existence or creation of language, and the world (the materiality of the things/phenomenon) preceding the fatal act of naming. Here death exceeds intentionality, in Critchley's words "death is not the noema of a noesis" (85) This impossibility of death is a For a more detailed elaboration see *Infinite Conversation* 310; see also *SL* 117-8 and *FP* 35.

To Blanchot, suicide is a desperate attempt to dominate or master death, to assimilate it as a moment of one's own life in which one exercises one's will. In an ironic sense, it can be referred to as a leap of faith in which one ends up being suspended over an abyss while gradually getting drained of his/her will. Blanchot's explanation is elucidating: "The weakness of suicide lies in the fact that whoever commits it is still too strong. He is demonstrating a strength suitable only for a citizen of the world. Whoever kills himself could, then, go on living: whoever kills himself is linked to hope, the hope of finishing it all" (*Space of Literature*[174] 103).

Accordingly, both the artist who inhabits (the first slope of) Arcadia and the person who commits suicide intend to make a spectacle of death, to stage the act of dying, to dignify, to glorify their arduous task or to wrest meaning from the travails they have endured. Such a predilection is starkly observable in Sleen who cannot capitulate to death without a recourse to histrionics:

> I take a chance here but — I risk the most appalling but all circumspection has deserted me and obviously if Death takes me it will be with such a festival of diabolical agony I predict, such refinement of cruelty **the worst death yet recorded** and I include the martyrs, no, I am piling up a spectacular departure but even I cannot hear beauty bludgeoned by Mr Tocsin's cretinous sensibility, even I, God help me, **is it my turn now...?** (316)

This latent facet of suicide is also accentuated elsewhere in *The Bite of the Night*:

> MACLUBY: What do you think suicide is, a solitary act? It's peopled with absences.
>
> SAVAGE: I have absences.
>
> MACLUBY: You murdered everything, and long for nothing.
>
> Aren't you already dead? (He picks up his bag and walks away.)
>
> SAVAGE: That's knowledge, then... (Pause. Whistling off-) (*Collected Plays 4*, 116)

Thus, death, in this conception, is not death as such; it is rather a death replete with life as Blanchot eloquently says it is "a death which has not met death. It is death in which there is much talk of life, but in it is not heard the unheard language from which speech emerges like a new gift" (*Space*

[174] Henceforth abbreviated to *SL*.

of Literature 101). Such death, on the one hand, is a heroic death and on the other hand it is a death not as a work but as an inspiring source or an object of art: death as "the mother of beauty" (Wallace Stevens, *CP* 68). In this regard, Blanchot writes: "Those who do not abandon themselves elude thus the absolute abandon. We are spared the worst, but the essential escapes us. It is not heard the unheard language from which speech emerges like a new gift" (*SL* 101).

In fact, intimately interlaced with the question of suicide is the notion of double death (and the second slope). Mosca - moments after he has been abandoned by Dover despite threatening her that "leave me and I'll hang myself", adding: "Death yes no horror there's the tree" - asks Poussin: "What lies ... the other side ... of undone death Monsieur?" (285) The answer to this interrogation, I would suggest, resides in the notion of 'double death' and is twofold: what lies the other side of undone death is both a living death (an interminably stretched process of dying: le mourir in il y a) and undying life; more clearly, it involves a corrosive longing for, commingled with a horror at the absence of, death. What is noteworthy in Arcadia is that the power in which they feel entrapped is perceived to be both interior and exterior. In the double death (*SL* 103) the person feels that he is pray to an impersonal and sinister power. Blanchot explains: "There is one death which circulates in the language of possibility, of liberty, which has for its furthest horizon the freedom to die and the power to take mortal risks – and there is its double, which is ungraspable, it is what I cannot grasp, what is linked to me by any relation of any sort , that never comes and toward which I do not direct myself" (*SL* 104).

Arcadia is an il-ya-tic space in that, in it, being constantly "returns" even though they constantly embark on committing murder or suicide, though unavailingly, death proves impossible and they remain riveted to being/existence or life. Such a state, I would argue, is highly akin to, and evocative of, the il y atic space that Levinas depicts, in which one is chained to Being, one is constrained (with no possibility or prospect of self-transcendence) where the negation of murder brings no release or relief, nor the elimination of the Other and s/he returns spectrally.[175] Il y a is

[175] Levinas' elaboration of various features of il y a merits being quoted in full: "Let us imagine all beings, things and persons, reverting to nothingness. One cannot put this return to nothingness outside of all events. But what of this nothingness itsel0 Something would happen, if only night and the silence of nothingness. The indeterminateness of this "something is happening" is not the indeterminateness of a subject and does not refer to a substantive. Like the third person pronoun in the impersonal form of a verb, it designates not t}le uncertainly known author of the action, but the characteristic of this action itself which somehow has no author. This impersonal, anonymous, yet

more fully apprehended when placed in conjunction with the cluster of concepts in *Existence and Existents*, including horror and hypostasis (meaning the way in which the existent contracts or takes up a position with regard to his existence): "[T]he il y a is the place where the hypostasis is produced" (*EE* 50). The il y a effects not just a loss of world and "the disappearance of all objects," but also the "extinction of the subject" and of the very distinction between subject and object (*EE* 67). It eludes "even with the category of the substantive" (*EE* 67). Il y a features as a nocturnal space in which the self is confronted with the irremissibility of existence . Il y a, Levinas writes in *Existence and Existents*, "is the very return of presence into the void left by absence - not the return of some thing,but of a presence; it is the reawakening of the there is in the heart of negation. It is an indefectibility of being, where the work of being never lets up; it is its insomnia" (65).

As is evident in *Existence and Existents*, the description of the il y a is juxtaposed with the description of art as exoticism (see also Robbins 91-101). In fact, in *Existence and Existents* not only is imagination posited as the principal way of approaching and perceiving il y a, but aesthetic category and literature figure as the principal means through which il y a is depicted and rendered more palpable. The two are not only conceptually linked, but connected in their being anti-hypostasis and anti-identity. But beyond this convergence, there is, in both *Existence and Existents* and *Time and the Other*, an utter intrication of art and the il y a. Levinas deploys numerous literary examples to illustrate his notion of the il y a; Blanchot's *Thomas the Obscure* and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* constitute its most conspicuous examples. Interesting for our purposes here, and particularly given Barker's theatre of catastrophe being avowedly tragic, there Levinas invests the aesthetic (and already philosophical) genre of tragedy with the revelation of the il y a. It is in the limit-situations of murder and of dying resonantly depicted in Shakespearean tragedy that Levinas finds the inability to escape from being, from anonymous existence, the nocturnal horror of the haunting recurrence of presence in negation, the return of phantasms, shadows, and ghosts.[176] Here

inextinguishable "consummation" of being, which murmurs in the depths of nothingness itself, we shall designate by the term there is" (*EE*, 57).

[176] Levinas writes: "In Macbeth, the apparition of Banquo's ghost is also a decisive experience of the 'no exit' from existence, its phantom return through the fissures through which one has driven it. 'The times have been, that when the Brains were out, the man would dye, and there an end; But now they rise again ... and push us from our stools. This is more strange than such a murther is.' 'And it is over with' is impossible. The horror does not come from the danger. 'What man dare, I dare... Approach thou like the rugged Russian Bear... Take any shape but that, and my firm Nerves shall never tremble ' ' 'Hence horrible Shadow, unreal mockery hence...' It is the shadow of being that horrifies Macbeth; the profile of being that takes form in nothingness" (*EE* 62).

Levinas hints at an extended reading of. Macbeth in terms of the il y a. Levinas privileges Shakespeare for his "existentialist" philosophy as such .

In fact the very concluding words of the play testify to the foregoing contention. The play draws to its non-closure with these words uttered by Verdun: "Less…/ Less…" which can be interpreted to imply the adoption of a less assertive and less authoritative attitude by the artist/Poussin; thus designate the moment when the spontaneous (self-centred) rhythm of the artist's initiative/enterprise is punctuated and modified/ moderated by the infinitely transcendent and inassimilable Other and his/her death (here Dover). Thus the fact that Poussin subjugates (and kills) Tocsin (death), in a certain respect, can be construed in two different ways. On the one hand, the murder of death (Tocsin) demonstrates the aporetic state of death (its fragility, feebleness and impotence) in Arcadia. On the other, it can be inferred that/ as an evidence that he belongs to the first slope (of the Revolutionary/Romantic conception of the relation between art and death/mortality and the artist as the conqueror of death, emblematizing Kafka's renowned statement: "I write to die content" (*GO* 58-9) or the Hegelian stance on the life that endures death and maintains itself in death (*SL* 101)) the conviction that art can serve as the means for attaining mastery over death.

Neverthless, given the utterance of "Less/Less", which I would argue starkly marks a drastic shift in Poussin's perspective, Poussin can be regarded to epitomize the Blanchotian artist oscillating or swinging between the first and the second slope the dweller of the il y a space. Accordingly, one of the tentative answers to the fact that Poussin manages to strangle Tocsin as the impersonation/representation of death is accounted for by referring to the fact that the artist more than anyone else is the dweller or inhabitant of the threshold, the border, whose intimacy with death, with borderline or liminal state and oscillation between the first and second slope far surpasses others. As Poussin himself affirms, he was born Arcadian. Nevertheless, whether we assume the canvas as his work or even, however untenable, the whole Arcadia and the characters as his work, in neither case the killing (eradication or surmounting death) results in the production or completion of either of them but both veer towards an aesthetic and state of "Less / Less" that a state of lessness and an aesthetic of worklessness.

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